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Assistant Principals and the Phenomenon of Leadership Coaching

By

Thomas E. Flugum

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Educational Leadership

in the

Bagwell College of Education

Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw, Georgia

2018

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Doctor of Education

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DEDICATION

To my devoted mother, Frances J. Flugum, who raised me right and who was love, strength, and perseverance for me her entire life, and who was never out of the fight.

To my two amazing children, Thomas and Ariel Flugum, who are God's greatest gift and who are my purpose, and their mother Patricia Flugum for her kindness, encouragement, and dedication.

and

To Lisa Kendrick, who has been with me from day one of this journey, for her sacrifices, encouragement, patience, and support through this seemingly never ending process.

ABSTRACT

ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS AND THE PHENOMENON OF LEADERSHIP COACHING

by

Thomas E. Flugum

Kennesaw State University, 2018

This study sought to define and explore executive leadership coaching as a form of professional learning for educational leaders. This was a qualitative phenomenological inquiry into the ways, if any, that leadership coaching impacts the skills and abilities of first-year assistant principals. Research was conducted with a cohort of newly appointed assistant principals from a suburban school district outside of Atlanta, Georgia. Participants were part of a district leadership academy which provided professional learning and support for new administrators. The participants received leadership coaching from coaches endorsed by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) as one form of professional learning.

Keywords: assistant principal, leadership coaching, coaching, leadership, self-efficacy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Districts and schools are continually engaged in developing and providing professional learning for the growth and development of their staff. The landscape of education is continually changing and the challenges faced at every level continue to increase. The continual pressure on schools to meet the ever changing needs of their students requires districts and schools to seek a variety of forms of professional learning that is both effective and efficient. This study is investigating the practice of leadership coaching as an effective form of professional learning for educational leaders.

Problem Statement: Professional Learning for First Year Assistant Principals

Schools routinely provide many professional learning opportunities for teachers but very little for assistant principals (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). Professional learning often takes the form of monthly instructional or operational learning or meetings and does not routinely affect or improve the skills of the staff. Leadership coaching as a form of continuous job-embedded professional learning addresses and affects the development of the skills necessary specifically for first-year assistant principals (Brackett, Holzer, Patti, & Stern, 2012).

By creating systemic, district-wide coaching initiatives that include professional learning for assistant principals, local districts will create a mechanism for continuous professional learning. This, in turn, will build leadership capacity among administrators with a focus on achievement and avenues for reflective practice and growth.

There has been little application of leadership coaching as a practice in the field of education (Aguilar, 2013; Chandler, 2016). Educational leadership coaching as a support and development model for assistant principals may prove to be a valuable tool in facilitating

improvement in student achievement, enhancing instructional practices, providing avenues for reflective growth, and to create job-embedded continual professional learning for assistant principals (Aguilar, 2013).

While the research for educational leadership coaching is growing, the literature on its use as a method of embedded professional learning for assistant principals is limited.

Professional learning for educational leaders improves self-efficacy and positively impacts the culture and climate leading to school improvement and achievement (Miller, Goddard, Kim, Jacob, Goddard & Schroeder, 2016).

Research Questions

Educational leadership coaching as a support and development model for assistant principals may prove to be a valuable tool in facilitating improvement in student achievement, enhancing instructional practices, providing avenues for reflective growth, and creating job-embedded continual professional learning for assistant principals (Aguilar, 2013).

This study researched leadership coaching as professional learning for assistant principals in the following ways:

1. In what ways, if any, does leadership coaching help newly appointed assistant principals address challenges faced in their professional role?
2. In what ways, if any, does leadership coaching develop leadership capacity and self-efficacy in newly appointed assistant principals?
3. What are newly appointed assistant principals' perceptions of leadership coaching as a useful and viable form of professional learning?

Participants in the study were coached by two certified coaches. The coaches are certified by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) which is the governing body for

educators in the state of Georgia. Coaches participated in an endorsement program in leadership coaching at Kennesaw State University. Both coaches hold leadership positions within the district, one as an assistant principal of a middle school, the second at the district level in high school operations.

Purpose and Significance

Coaching for leadership capacity has been a common and successful form of professional development in business and corporate America (MacKie, 2015). Leadership coaching as a form of professional learning can be a highly effective and incorporates many components of effective professional learning in an educational setting. Coaching as a professional learning tool is designed to promote the ownership and growth of clients. It is a valuable component of a systemic, defined process created to promote sustained improvement of an individual personally and professionally (Wenson, 2010).

The benefits of coaching as a form of professional learning will come from educators by highlighting their strengths and skills; promoting the development of instructional practices; building collaborative teams; assisting in the development of compassion and understanding; and promoting the emotional learning of educators (Aguilar, 2013). As noted by Gladwell (2008), deliberate practice is needed to promote continuous improvement, to master a complex skill; as such, coaching as a professional learning design allows leaders to improve their practice, develop skills, become more reflective, and facilitate student achievement.

Leadership coaching fits the guidelines set forth for effective preparation of assistant principals. Coaching is site-specific, can be customized to develop any number of skills, and is personalized. Bush, Bell, and Middlewood (2010) included coaching as part of a three-pronged

approach to personalized learning; along with coaching, other supports included mentoring and facilitating.

Coaching is often confused with mentoring. For example, Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) used the terms *mentoring* and *coaching* interchangeably. Bush et al. (2010) distinguished mentoring from coaching but noted that “such distinctions are not applied consistently and coaching and mentoring practices often seem quite similar” (2010, p. 119).

Mentoring and coaching are different forms of support and professional learning. According to Executive Coaching Services (Chandler, 2016, p. 3):

A mentor often has many more years of experience than the person being supported.

Mentoring is akin to role modeling where the client sees attributes, qualities, or abilities in the mentor that he/she wishes to learn or emulate. Coaching is a partnering of two equals, which focuses on the unique and intrinsic qualities already within the client that may not be recognized or appreciated. The coach helps the client affirm and embrace his or her own true self.

Therefore, two concerns with coaching as a form of professional learning for assistant principals can be concluded. Firstly, coaching is not truly understood by many and is often lumped together with mentoring as a single form of learning. Secondly, coaching practices are not truly understood by those who seek to implement coaching, and thus development called “coaching” ends up becoming a form of mentoring.

To truly determine the effectiveness of coaching in the development of assistant principals, a coaching program must adhere to the principles and techniques of coaching and, by definition, function differently than mentoring.

Conceptual Framework

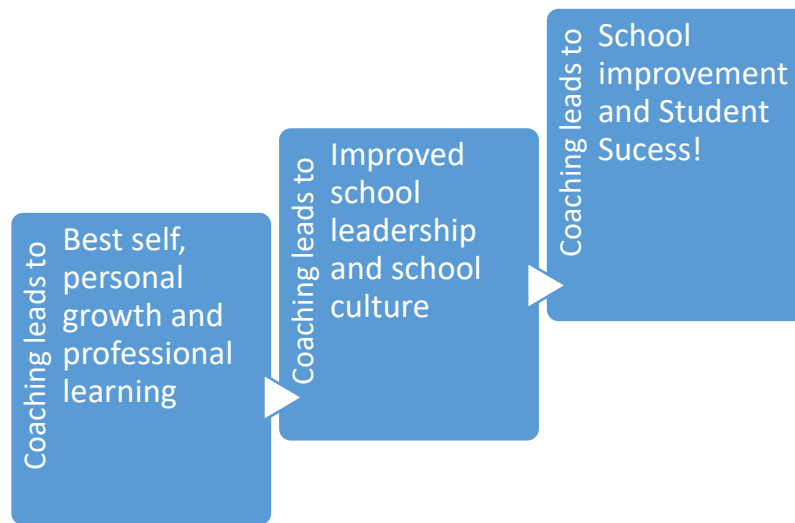


Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Conceptual Framework

The above graphic represents a constructivist conceptual framework in expressing the cyclical connectivity of personal and professional growth and learning. This growth leads to improved leadership and a positive school culture, which in turn leads to overall school improvement and ultimately student success. The goal or mission of any educational institution or organization is student achievement and student success. This graphic reflects an underlying constructivist conceptual framework. Constructivist individuals seek meaning in the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meaning of their experiences, meanings directed toward objects, things, or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). In this case, that phenomenon is the experience of leadership coaching.

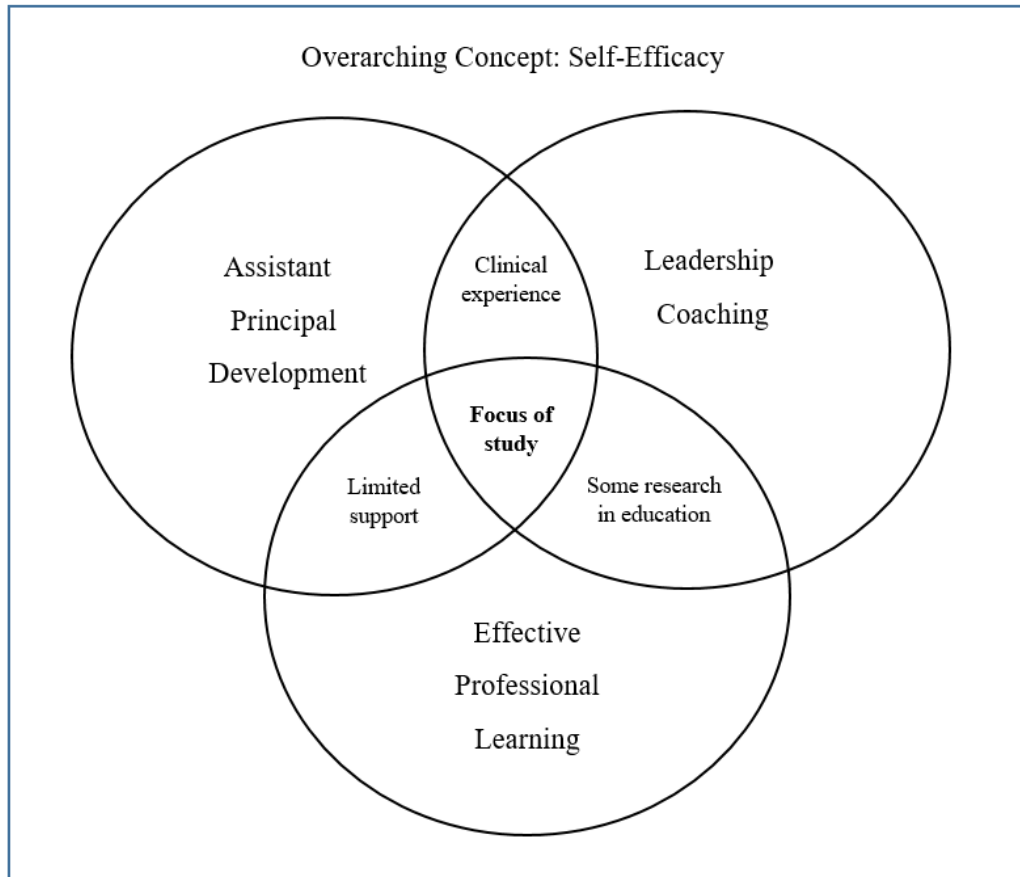


Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Leadership Coaching Conceptual Framework

The graphical representation shown in Figure 2 delineates the major themes of this study. The focus of the study lies at the intersection of assistant principal development, effective professional learning, and leadership coaching with an overarching concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is one’s perceived ability to perform specific leadership tasks and utilize specific leadership skills. Moen and Allgood (2009) found that “effective executive coaching increases self-efficacy” (p. 76).

There is limited research in the literature to support effective assistant principal learning programs (Hunt, 2011). Leadership coaching, a form of professional learning originating in the private business sector for high-achieving leaders, has some research in education but little evidence in the literature of use with assistant principals. The leadership coaches participating in

this study have clinical experience and university provided training focused specifically on educational leadership. While the graphical representation points out several gaps in the literature, this study will focus on leadership coaching as an effective form of professional learning for new assistant principals.

There are inherent biases and subjectivities from every researcher. We all have our own unique experiences and perceptions of life, humanity, society, actions, and people based on those experiences. My subjectivities and biases related to my own experiences are those of a white, middle-aged male who was raised to believe in the value of education as the ultimate social equalizer and expression of individual achievement. In addition, I have unique experiences in education having worked at a variety of schools, but all within a single district. The policies and procedures and practices of that district present a singular perspective in regard to teacher and administrative practices in the field. Now serving as a Principal in that district my view, scope, and expectations of the performance of assistant principals is also subjective.

In order to address these perceptions, subjectivities, and biases in research, a prescribed, tested, and approved methodology was used. This included acceptable peer-reviewed practices of data collection, analysis, reporting, and archiving. In addition, member checking by colleagues of practices and process were utilized by certified leadership coaches working with participants from the District Leadership Academy (DLA). Participant data used for this study was collected from participants who were coached by other certified coaches working with participants from the DLA which minimized influences, subjectivities, and biases of the author of this study.

Review of Relevant Terms

- *Leadership* – guiding, directing, and influencing people and processes to desired outcomes.
- *Coaching* – a practice and process that unlocks a person’s potential to maximize his or her own performance (Whitmore, 1992).
- *Leadership coaching* – the process of coaching directed at the potential of a person to develop skills and acumen associated with leadership.
- *Assistant Principal* – a leadership position within a school setting to help and guide specific processes as assigned by the Principal.
- *Self-efficacy* – one’s belief in his or her ability or capacity to perform a task or job.

Organization of Study

Chapter 1 of this study presented the background and purpose of the study with a statement of the problem, the research questions to be investigated, and the purpose and significance of the study. Chapter 1 also presented the conceptual framework under which the study was derived and its organization. Chapter 2 contains the theoretical framework followed by a review of the literature to include the role and preparation of the assistant principal, leadership coaching as professional learning, leadership impact on student achievement, social justice, and advocacy. The review concludes with other research in leadership in education. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study by restating the research questions and defining the research design including rationalization of a qualitative research and a phenomenological design. Chapter 3 also includes worldviews, research traditions, participant information, processes for data collection, details of the coaching process and interviews,

trustworthiness, and ethics. Chapter 4 describes the findings of the research. Chapter 5 details the conclusions, implications, and future research recommendations as identified by the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

This study follows a constructivist or social constructivist framework. The study reflects the position that individuals seek understanding in the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2014). Individuals develop meaning from their experience. The research relies on the participants' views of the phenomenon of leadership coaching and its impact, if any, on their belief and efficacy of their performance as new assistant principals. The constructivist framework is rooted in adult learning theory and social cognitive theory. As participants were coached, they were asked to reflect on their skills, duties, and their performance. Leadership coaching is a tool for individuals to improve and grow in many areas, at many levels. The purpose is for individuals to learn and grow.

In adult learning theory Malcolm Knowles presented five characteristics of adult learners (Knowles, Swanson & Holton, 2005): Self-concept, learner experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn. Knowles asserts that as people mature they see themselves as self-directed human beings. Adults accumulate variety of experiences that serve as a resource for learning. They seek opportunities to develop and acquire skills and knowledge. They understand the immediacy of application of knowledge, and they are internally motivated to learn. In the application of professional learning for newly appointed assistant principals, for example, there will be new experiences that will be encountered for which there has been no prior learning or experience such as discipline of students and evaluation of teachers. Newly appointed assistant principals need to be self-motivated and be able to immediately apply

new skills and knowledge. In addition, leadership coaching is a highly reflective process that requires examination of the participants' experiences in order to improve.

Bandura's social cognitive theory incorporates three interrelated variables, shown in Figure 3, that cause learning to occur: behavioral factors which consists of a person's skills, self-efficacy, motivation, and practice; environmental factors which include social and cultural norms; and cognitive (also called personal) factors which incorporate an individual's knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes (Bandura, 1986).

Behavioral factors are largely influenced by the feedback that an individual would receive from a learned behavior. In the case of a new assistant principal for example, if he or she receives positive feedback from the staff on the development of a testing plan, confidence in the performance of that task and similar tasks would increase and impact learned behavior.

Environmental factors are rooted in social norms and access in the community. In the case of the assistant principal, the socialization of the role directly impacts behavior and learning. As a new assistant principal the understanding and experiencing of the social and cultural expectations associated with the role of the AP will impact behavior. An example of this is understanding the role of the AP as an evaluator and the impact that has on the type of relationship changes that may be required with staff.

Finally, cognitive personal factors are based on the knowledge and attitudes that a person has when entering a new situation. As a newly appointed assistant principal, an individual's beliefs about the job will influence behavior. For example, if a person believes that the leadership role is critical in improving student achievement, that the role is valuable, that belief will impact that person's behavior.

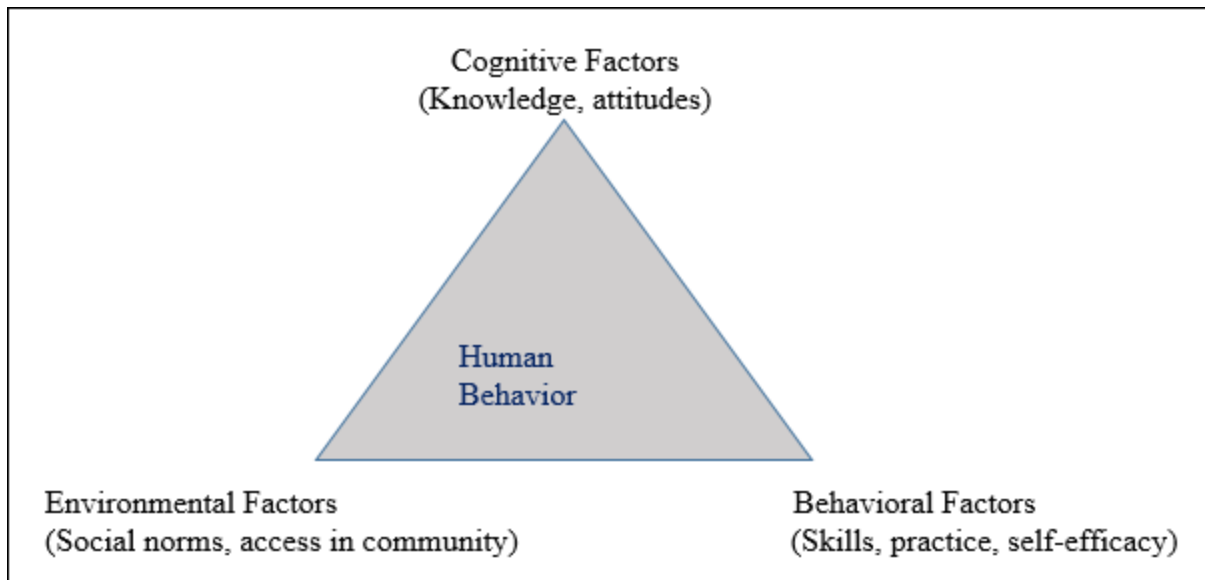


Figure 3: Social Cognitive Theory (adapted from Bandura, 1986)

Self-Efficacy

Another aspect of leadership that has an impact on student achievement is self-efficacy. In his 1994 paper on self-efficacy Bandura defines the concept as “a person’s belief about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994 p. 2). Self-efficacy is further defined by Bandura as the belief about one’s own ability or the ability of one’s colleagues collectively (collective efficacy), to perform a task or achieve a goal. It should be noted that efficacy is the belief about the ability, not the actual ability (Bandura, 1994). The literature notes that there is a significant contribution that positive efficacy beliefs on the part of people in many different roles increases task performance, attendance, and academic achievement (Prussia, Anderson, & Manz, 1998). Other literature then notes that there were statistically weak but significant effects of leader efficacy on some indicators of student learning, specifically, the proportion of students in schools reaching or exceeding proficiency levels on state tests (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Leadership Coaching as Professional Learning

Professional learning, also known as professional development, is defined as a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improve an individual's effectiveness (National Development Council, 2009). In the case of educators, this would be improving the individual's effectiveness to improve school effectiveness in student achievement. Aguilar (2013) goes on to describe professional learning as effective implementation of new skills to improve educators' crafts and improve student learning.

Quality in educational practices breeds school success and student achievement. All stakeholders yearn for school and student success due to the impact the achievement provides economically, socially, and academically for a child and the community in which the child lives. The classroom teacher's skills and knowledge are the most important factor to that child's academic growth and success, and the community desires quality classroom teachers who know how to foster student growth. Thus, each classroom teacher must seek professional development opportunities in order to continue to learn how to transform learned practices into student success through personal and professional growth while building pedagogical knowledge and instructional strategies that transform classroom practices (Barton, 2016).

Educators know that the most effective form of professional development for classroom teachers (Jacob & Lefgren, 2002; Keller, 2007; Marsh, Bertrand, & Huguet, 2015; Zwart, Wobbles, Ergen, & Bolus, 2009) begins in a collegiate learning environment and involves the transfer of learned strategies through implementation within the classroom. Yet most offerings of professional development are structured in a way that lacks transferability (Keller, 2007) leading classroom teachers to feel isolated and left without support. Often, professional development is a costly endeavor for a school system, and with the lack of actual applicability, money and

opportunities for growth are lost. A professional development coaching program (Aguilar, 2013; Akhavan, 2015; Grant, Green, & Rynsaardt, 2010) – a program designed to occur within the classroom – encourages and supports the individual classroom teacher while directly resulting in increased collaboration, support for change, and student achievement.

An effective coaching model for the classroom teacher and building-level leaders requires more than the desire to increase one's skills and knowledge. Teachers work in teams – whether interdisciplinary or homogeneous by subject – and are measured in part by student performance on state assessments (Akhavan, 2015; Marsh et al., 2015). Yet, the professional learning communities often lack cohesion in ideas and goals, an area in which a coach must enact change. The coach works to distribute leadership amongst the members, cultivating a community in which all members provide vital insight and knowledge. In addition, a coaching program helps professional learning communities with the review and authentic use of data (Marsh et al., 2015). Research shows that coaches help teachers understand the data while providing help in the implementation of goals to improve future data outcomes, by building and coaching a professional learning community whose desire is to increase student achievement and the individual teacher's knowledge and skills. A coach cultivates a collegial and collaborative environment while also building a network of support for each member (Barton, 2016).

The benefits of coaching as a form of professional learning will come from educators by highlighting their strengths and skills; promoting the development of instructional practices; building collaborative teams; assisting in the development of compassion and understanding; and promoting the emotional learning of educators (Aguilar, 2013). As noted by Gladwell (2008), deliberate practice is needed to promote continuous improvement, to master a complex skill; as

such, coaching as a method of professional learning design allows leaders to improve their practice, develop skills, become more reflective, and facilitate student achievement.

The components and process of leadership coaching correspond and align with many identified components of effective professional learning. Brown and Militello cited in a study on principals' perceptions of effective professional development 34 statements that represent specific effective strategies for professional development or professional learning (Brown & Militello, 2016). Leadership coaching is reflected in some capacity in nearly half of those statements that principals identified as effective professional learning. Fourteen of the statements that incorporate leadership coaching from that study follow below. Following each statement is a component or process statement of leadership coaching that explains the connection to effective professional learning (Brown & Militello, 2016, p.708-710)

- *Establishing a collaborative culture among colleagues is an element of effective professional development.* Coaching is a collaborative process.
- *Effective professional development sustains a consistency of focus over time.* Coaching is a process that can last week, months or even years based on client needs.
- *An effective element of professional development is personal focused reflection.* Coaching requires the clients to assess themselves, their performance, and progress, and to reflect in every session. Client growth and development is based on questioning by the coach in order for the client to arrive at solutions from within.
- *Effective professional development includes coaching from a peer or mentor.* Although coaching and mentoring differ in practice and process, they both serve as a sustainable job-embedded form of professional learning.

- *An effective element of professional development for teachers (and leaders) is to conduct differentiated sessions based on career stages, with specialized training for aspiring, new, and experienced teachers (and leaders).* Coaching meets the clients where they are both in terms of personal and skill development and with goals and development based on the desire of the clients at any stage of their careers.
- *Effective professional development is primarily school-based as opposed to district-based.* Coaching is designed to be experienced by equals; it is not top-down or district-down professional learning. In addition, sessions should be conducted in environments where the client is comfortable, often in the local school.
- *Effective professional development exposes teachers (and leaders) to actual practice rather than to descriptions of practice.* Coaching focuses on areas for improvement guided by the client. Clients set goals and action plans related to what is going on in their building at that moment and provide action to be taken and reflected on at that moment.
- *Effective professional development should only focus on a few concepts at one time.* Coaching identifies specific areas, usually one area at a time, for client development. That area is focused on for specific amounts of time by way of setting SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely) goals that require actions to be timely.
- *A prerequisite of effective professional development is that one must have good reason to believe that the change being introduced is itself of value.* In coaching the clients self-assess and determine the areas for improvement. Coaching is not a program or a directive for improvement. Because the clients are identifying the areas where they seek improvement and development, these areas are of value.

- *Effective professional development involves professional learning communities with sources outside the school.* Coaching by nature is a collaborative process that focuses on learning and is results oriented. The client and coach seek resources both inside and outside of the school setting.
- *Effective professional development links directly with day-to-day work in real schools and classrooms.* In coaching the client determines areas for focus, and improvement solutions are based on real-world problems faced by the client.
- *Effective professional development should be primarily school-based and integral to school operations.* Coaching involves job-embedded professional learning and focuses on relevant issues faced by the client in the school.
- *Effective professional development includes providing time, contexts, and support for teachers (and leaders) to think.* Coaching is an ongoing process. Coaching would typically call for six to 10 sessions conducted on a weekly, bi-weekly, or sometimes monthly basis. Clients are encouraged to reflect, think, and document thoughts and ideas for further growth and development.
- *Effective professional development is embedded in the specific content of the student curriculum.* Coaching focuses on areas defined by the client. The ultimate goal is for the leader to improve performance and increase leadership capacity. As a leader in the school, student achievement and development of teachers in content areas is impacted by the leader. In addition, many clients and leaders will focus on areas directly related to content and curriculum issues.

Leadership coaching fits the guidelines set forth for effective preparation of assistant principals. Coaching is site-specific, can be customized to develop any number of skills, and is

personalized. Bush et al. (2010) included coaching as part of a three-pronged approach to personalized learning; along with coaching, other supports included mentoring and facilitating.

As school districts around the nation seek to increase the implementation of professional learning to foster a culture of continuous and systematic development based on collaboration and cooperation, leadership coaching offers support, feedback, and personal learning. Coaching is a professional tool for improving instruction, creating a reflective practice, and planning effectively for goal attainment (Knight, 2016).

Coaching is often confused with mentoring. For example, Oleszewski et al. (2012) used the terms “mentoring” and “coaching” interchangeably. Bush et al. distinguished mentoring from coaching but noted that “such distinctions are not applied consistently and coaching and mentoring practices often seem quite similar” (2010, p. 119). Therefore, two concerns with coaching as a form of professional learning for assistant principals can be concluded. Firstly, coaching is not truly understood by many and is often lumped together with mentoring as a single form of learning. Secondly, coaching practices are not truly understood by those who seek to implement coaching, and thus development called “coaching” ends up becoming a form of mentoring.

To truly determine the effectiveness of coaching in the development of assistant principals, a coaching program must adhere to the principles and techniques of coaching and, by definition, function differently than mentoring.

School Leadership Influences on Student Achievement

A primary goal of educators and educational leaders across the country is increasing student achievement. Literature and research indicate a strong and decisive link between leadership and its impact on student learning (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson & Wahlstrom,

2004; Macneil, Prater, & Bush, 2009). The ability to successfully educate students and lead schools today requires a multitude of skills. School leaders shape curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions. They create cultural, climate, procedural, and operational expectations for staff and students. They plan the professional development necessary for continued growth and development of staff and build a collaborative climate for the success of all school stakeholders (Augustine-Shaw, 2015).

Leithwood et al. (2004) found that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all factors that contribute to what students learn at school. The development of effective leaders and building leadership capacity should have a high priority for districts and schools. Determining the effectiveness of professional learning models is necessary in order to know if a particular model should be used by the district in the development of leadership. Leithwood et al. also proposed a framework of influences that contribute to student learning that are directly controlled or impacted by school leaders that impact student achievement.

State and district policies interact and directly impact what building leaders, such as assistant principals, do. Other influences on school leaders such as the media, stakeholder organizations, and community groups also influence leader practices. An additional factor that Leithwood et al. identifies are the experiences of the leaders themselves (2004). From the impact of these sources of leaders' practice, the nature of school conditions is shaped. These include conditions such as school culture, the structure of classroom conditions and environment, and the content of instruction and instructional practice within the classroom. These variables in turn both directly and indirectly affect classroom conditions and the teacher's professional community and practice, which directly impact student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Visible Learning by John Hattie (2009) is a seminal work on student learning; it is a meta-analysis of over 800 meta-analyses. Hattie identifies two prominent forms of leadership: instructional and transformational. Instructional leadership is based in creating a school climate with minimal disruptions, a clear vision focused on student achievement, and high expectations (Hattie, 2009). Empirical evidence suggests that instructional leaders who promote challenging goals and establish safe environments for teachers to critique, question, and support each other to reach goals have the largest impact on student achievement (Hattie, 2009).

In another meta-analysis Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) cited that the most relevant aspects of leadership that impact student achievement are related to leaders who create an environment and culture where teachers feel empowered to create a conversation that challenges the status quo. This includes leadership that provides schools with current and diverse ways to address concerns of student achievement. Leadership that provides a culture that empowers teachers to design and implement strategies to enhance student achievement is important. Leaders who promote and establish goals that enhance student achievement and have processes for progress monitoring and using feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning are effective. When leaders create a culture and environment that promote these factors student achievement is positively impacted (Waters et al., 2003).

In addition, an article by Harris, Hopkins and Leithwood (2008) proposes seven claims about successful school leadership. Claim one reasserts Leithwood's (2004) prior findings that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning. The findings also indicate that as stated in claim four: School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions (Leithwood, Harris, Hopkins, 2008). The article also asserts that schools

with the highest levels of student achievement attribute their success in student growth to high levels of influence from all sources of leadership. In addition, leaders had indirect impact on student achievement by having strong and positive influences on staff member's motivations, commitments, and beliefs concerning the supportiveness of their working conditions impacting teacher performance and improved instruction (Leithwood et al., 2008).

An additional study by Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, and Anderson (2010) indicates that school leaders strengthen the school's professional community. In turn staff engagement in a professional learning community fosters the use of instructional practices that are associated and impact student achievement.

Key findings of this study included the following (Wahlstrom et al., 2010, p. 66):

- Previous research has identified a set of core practices underlying the work of successful school- and district-level leaders. About 15 in total, these practices can be classified as *Setting Directions*, *Developing People*, *Redesigning the Organization*, and *Managing the Instructional Program*.
- Almost all leadership practices considered instructionally helpful by principals and teachers were specific enactments of these core practices.
- Teachers and principals were in substantial agreement about the leadership practices they considered to be instructionally helpful.
- Teachers generally agreed with one another in identifying helpful leadership practices. Teachers varying widely in the sophistication of their classroom instruction nevertheless identified as helpful most of the same leadership practices.
- School level (elementary, middle, high school) had a small effect on the

importance teachers attached to a small number of leadership practices.

- Teachers and principals agreed that the most instructionally helpful leadership practices were: *Focusing the school on goals and expectations for student achievement*; *Keeping track of teachers' professional development needs*; and *Creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate*.

Dutta and Sahney (2016) also found that there was a significant relationship for both instructional and transformational leadership dimensions to student achievement. They noted that their findings lend credence to their proposed hypothesis that the benefits of leadership practices for student achievement are mediated by a positive school environment, which is supported and created by school leaders.

Youngs and King (2002) assert that leadership, in particular, is one of the most significant factors in determining the development, establishment of, and the extent to which professional learning communities operate in schools. According to Smylie and Wenzel (2003) in its most powerful form, professional learning communities are embedded as a form of practice and school culture to the point that teachers are not even aware of them. The evidence suggests from their study that teachers' sense of professional community is related to both improved instruction and student achievement (Smylie & Wenzel, 2003). The link between these two studies infers that leadership impact on teacher efficacy as part of a professional learning community contributes significantly to student achievement.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) attribute student success to yet another dimension of leadership. They cite that student achievement is greatly impacted by the specific classroom practices that leaders stimulate, encourage and promote. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) affirmed this in a meta-analysis saying that leaders and leadership researchers alike need to focus

on the educational content of activities in the school and their alignment with student outcomes, not just on motivation and direction setting activities.

Another large effect size of the Robinson et al. (2008) study was from leadership participation in teacher learning and development. School leaders need to be actively involved as the lead learners in their schools. Teachers report that the more active the leadership is in their learning and development the higher the student outcomes. When leaders focus on learning they are more likely to be viewed by the staff as a source of instructional advice, which suggests that they are both more accessible and more knowledgeable about instructional matters (Robinson et al., 2008).

Other research points to a leader's self-efficacy as a contributing factor in student achievement. Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura as the belief about one's own ability or the ability of one's colleagues collectively (collective efficacy), to perform a task or achieve a goal. It should be noted that it is the belief about the ability, not the actual ability (Bandura, 1994). The literature notes that there is a significant contribution that positive efficacy beliefs on the part of people in many different roles led to increased task performance, improved attendance, and increased academic achievement (Prussia et al., 1998). Other literature then notes that there were statistically weak but significant effects of leader efficacy on some indicators of student learning, specifically, the proportion of students in schools reaching or exceeding proficiency levels on state tests (Leithwood, Jantzi, 2008).

Additionally, other research supports the impact of leadership on school effectiveness and improvement (Hattie, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2004; Macneil et al, 2009; Waters et al., 2003). The development of leadership and building the leadership capacity and self-efficacy of leaders through leadership coaching serves those populations. In addition, it provides the confidence in

policymakers and politicians and district level leadership to continue to invest in leadership development. Case studies of schools that have had significant improvements in student achievement, often termed “turn around” schools, and of the interventions into teaching and learning, credit school and district leadership with considerable responsibility for school and teaching effectiveness in those schools (Edmonds, 1979; Maden, 2001; Scheurich, 1998).

There is also significant evidence that supports the quality of school leadership as the key to continual organizational, and professional learning and improvement (Datnow, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Coaching as a form of professional learning is designed to improve the skills, efficiency, and efficacy of school leaders and to contribute to better and more effective leadership with schools that serve students various marginalized groups, minorities, and the economically disadvantaged. The nature of leadership coaching as continuous sustained learning for leaders further contributes to ensuring that impactful leadership improvement is sustainable in school improvement in the populations and in the schools who need it the most.

Role of the Assistant Principal

While research on the effects of leadership coaching in education is limited, coaching as a practice for developing necessary leadership skills and abilities in other professional areas has proven to be effective (MacKie, 2015). Newly appointed assistant principals face challenges in the transition from teacher to administrator. They are likely to be assigned responsibilities and face situations very different from those they faced in the classroom. New skills and abilities will need to be learned and developed in order to address the challenges that a new administrator will face (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010).

New tasks assistant principals encounter include evaluating teachers; carrying out discipline; learning the organization of school-wide procedures including testing and scheduling;

and managing a number of duties and responsibilities. This transition presents many challenges for newly appointed assistant principals as Workman stated: “The transition from teacher to administration involves a complex socialization process that has serious implications with regard to the new administrator’s ability to be successful in the role” (2013, p. 16).

Workman (2013) noted there are relatively few studies on transitioning from teacher to assistant principal. Furthermore, the assistant principal position is becoming increasingly complex as more demands are put on school leaders. Additional studies confirm that the role of an assistant principal is critical to school improvement (Oleszewski et al., 2012)

Other researchers have taken a similar approach in researching the varied roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal. Wenson (2010) conducted a hermeneutic phenomenological study which explored the impact of skill development in managers that affected the managers’ direct reports. That study had several emerging themes as reported by the employees; skills that improved a motivational environment, creating a safe working environment, depth of communication, and self-reflection. Wenson stated that 95% of the direct reports observed that the managers were more self-reflective after coaching, and 65% stated that they felt the managers’ communication skills had noticeable improvement after leadership coaching (Wenson, 2010).

A similar 3-year qualitative study was conducted by Barnett and Shoho (2012). This study utilized semi-structured interviews of both beginning and experienced assistant principals to analyze the job realities of the assistant principal. Fifty-seven percent of the novice assistant principals and 42% of experienced assistant principals reported that time management and task completion were the most significant challenges they faced in their roles. These challenges were followed by student discipline and attendance, working with dissatisfied parents, staff conflicts,

and staff morale. In all areas, the novice and experienced assistant principals were within 3% of rating the job responsibilities the same (Barnett & Shoho, 2012).

An additional study by Shoho and Barnett (2010) examined the challenges faced by new principals. A qualitative study of 62 new principals was performed over several years. These new principals indicated that challenges included instructional leadership, managerial issues such as budgeting and human resources, and community issues such as school climate and expectations from parents. This study also addressed implications for leadership preparation. In particular, they cited that “new principals should have mentors and coaches who are well trained and account for the developmental phases of new principals” (p. 589).

In addition to the assigned duties and responsibilities of school leaders, there are the underlying social and policy issues that are woven into the ethical responsibilities of educators and school leaders. Public education is a public and social service, an institution founded in the virtue that all individuals can improve their own condition as well as the human condition through education. As educators, we are committed to serve our students. Vision and mission statements of many schools reflect the intention and commitment to grow students, to facilitate student success, and to increase student achievement. The inference, though sometimes unstated, in these statements and in the establishment of public education itself, is that we will serve all students.

In the simplest terms, social justice is the concept of equality and equity, which is a fundamental American value – a value that has not been fully or clearly realized in our country and a value that must continually be researched. It is not something that is ever complete and must be continually examined and scrutinized. This concept is not easily agreed upon and has several meanings: political, economic, educational, and basic human rights. It can also be

examined in several ways as equality of opportunity, equality of operation, and equality of results (Fowler, 2013).

There are many facets to social justice. As educators, our focus is on the social institution of the public school. Within a social justice context, our focus falls on the equity of opportunity for access to quality education and the equity of results as we look to identify and reduce achievement gaps with our schools and our system. There is particular significance, as educational leaders, from the definition of social justice by the Center for Economic and Social Justice: “Social justice also imposes on each of us a personal responsibility to work with others to design and continually perfect our institutions as tools for personal and social development” (para. 2). This is a call to advocacy for educational leadership within schools.

Educational leaders have a profound impact on those schools and populations that are impacted by the inequities in school systems. As school leaders, we are compelled to advocate, support, and pursue policies and practices that ensure equity and therefore social justice within schools. We are also bound to provide within the school policies and practices to engage those that are marginalized and impacted by achievement gaps in the decisions that affect them.

Leadership has the greatest impact in schools that need it the most. Schools that are functioning below proficiency and who are serving minority or marginalized populations can see the greatest improvement from effective leadership performance and from improved leadership capacity. Using leadership coaching as professional learning to build leadership capacity can, in turn, improve student achievement in schools and among populations who are underserved (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Existing research shows that the demonstrated effects of successful leadership are considerably greater in schools that are under the most difficult circumstances. There are

virtually no documented cases of troubled or failing schools being turned around without the intervention by powerful and effective leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Understanding this research contributes to the recent development by schools and districts having an increased focused interest in leadership development and professional learning programs for leaders. The links between leadership and student outcomes is the desire of policymakers, politicians, districts, schools, and the community to reduce the disparities that are apparent between various social and ethnic groups, and the belief, supported by research, that school leaders play a vital role in closing those gaps and improving schools and student achievement (Robinson et al., 2008).

Preparation of the Assistant Principal

How are teachers prepared to transition to the role of assistant principal? Workman (2013) found that assistant principals learn “through a combination of the coursework they complete for the position, the specific context of the school, and the onsite instructions given by the building principal” (p. 7). Other methods used to aid in transitioning may include leadership academies and job shadowing. However, assistant principals are often unprepared for their new roles. Oleszewski et al. (2012) found that assistant principals lack preparation from coursework. Workman (2013) concurred, adding that traditional college preparation is not a predictor of success on the job; while rising assistant principals may learn knowledge and skills about the job, they lack training in communication, conflict management, problem-solving, team development, and interpersonal skills.

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) identifies eight accountability standards by which school leaders are evaluated (see Figure 4). The standards illustrate many of the skills that school leaders are expected to perform and master.

School Leadership	
1. Instructional Leadership	The leader fosters the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, implementation, and evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to school improvement.
2. School Climate	The leader promotes the success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders.
Organizational Leadership	
3. Planning and Assessment	The leader effectively gathers, analyzes, and uses a variety of data to inform planning and decision-making consistent with established guidelines, policies, and procedures.
4. Organizational Management	The leader fosters the success of all students by supporting, managing, and overseeing the school's organization, operation, and use of resources.
Human Resources Leadership	
5. Human Resources Management	The leader fosters effective human resources management through the selection, induction, support, and retention of quality instructional and support personnel.
6. Teacher/Staff Evaluation	The leader fairly and consistently evaluates school personnel in accordance with state and district guidelines and provides them with timely and constructive feedback focused on improved student learning.
Professionalism and Communication	
7. Professionalism	The leader fosters the success of students by demonstrating professional standards and ethics, engaging in continuous professional development, and contributing to the profession.
8. Communication and Community Relations	The leader fosters the success of all students by communicating and collaborating effectively with stakeholders.

Figure 4: LKES Domains and Performance Standards (Georgia Department of Education, Office of School Improvement Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Division, 2014).

Professional learning for assistant principals and teacher leaders that aspire to school leadership positions in Georgia should center on the standards proposed by the Georgia Department of Education. The literature suggests that much of the learning for the assistant principal role occurs on the job. Therefore, much of the training for assistant principals must take place once they are already placed in the positions. Professional learning models need to be developed and implemented that can support teacher leaders and new assistant principals.

Unfortunately, effective professional learning for assistant principals is not well-defined in the literature. Few professional learning programs are designed for assistant principals, and program opportunities are not as deep as those offered for teachers and principals (Oleszewski et al., 2012). Workman noted, “Effective training should be site specific. Specific objectives should be designed in concrete terms and directly related to the day to day job responsibilities of the assistant principal” (2013, p. 19).

Accordingly, programs designed to prepare assistant principals should have specific qualities that allow assistant principals to learn on the job. Furthermore, Oleszewski et al. (2012) found that assistant principal development programs should be personalized. One method of professional learning for assistant principals that may be effective is mentoring, particularly for those assistant principals who aspire to become principals.

Workman found that a principal mentoring an assistant principal was ideal for preparing future building principals. Oleszewski et al. (2012) had similar findings, stating that “a positive relationship with the principal has been found to positively influence the level of preparation for the principalship” (p. 269). Ultimately, Oleszewski et al. concluded that there were mixed benefits on assistant principal professional learning programs and concluded that more research is needed to determine the efficacy and benefits of such programs.

Daniel Goleman published *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More Than IQ* in 1995. Goleman asserts that more than any other factor that determines effective leadership, it is a person’s intelligence about emotions and his or her personal and social competence that will determine success. Goleman (2013) identifies four emotional intelligence domains:

- *Self-Awareness*: reading one’s own emotions and recognizing their impact.
- *Self-Management*: emotional self-control, transparency, initiative, and optimism.

- *Social Awareness*: empathy, organizational awareness, and service.
- *Relationship Management*: inspiration, influence, change catalyst, conflict manager.

These domains and the associated traits represent areas that build leadership capacity in an individual. The development of emotional intelligence can be linked directly to coaching as a support model for personal improvement in these areas. One example would be the use of these domains and traits in the development of a professional balance wheel from which clients would identify areas of need for improvement.

Goleman's research suggests that professional learning to develop leaders should incorporate training on development of Emotional Intelligence or Quotient rather than on strictly technical, skill, or task-oriented training. Goleman asserts that high EQ skills are much more likely to indicate if a person will rise to the highest level of leadership (Goleman, 1995). Professional learning programs for new assistant principals and aspiring school leaders should incorporate training and development of these EQ skills.

Summary

A review of the literature indicates that the role of the assistant principal has a direct impact on school achievement, advocacy, and social justice in education. The literature also indicates that the role requires a variety of skills such as teacher evaluation, communication, and systematic organizational management; development of school-wide culture and climate; and overarching instructional leadership. Though there are professional learning models which address adult learning and leadership development there is little professional development directed for teacher leaders who aspire to become school leaders. In addition, the programs and models that are available do not address adequate preparation for the role of the assistant principal until an individual assumes that role. Leadership coaching has had impact in areas

outside of education and should be explored as a means of professional learning for assistant principals.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact of leadership coaching on school leaders. The value and influence of coaching as a form of professional learning for assistant principals in their first year of service was examined via phenomenology methodology.

The research focused on the shared experience of the participants who were in the District Leadership Academy (DLA) and were receiving leadership coaching from state-certified leadership coaches. The value of leadership coaching in the new role as assistant principals will be explored, specifically with regard to their development of new and emerging skills, knowledge, and efficacy. Most important in this study is the perception of the experience as a form of professional learning and development.

Qualitative Research

Stake (2010) defines qualitative research as research that relies primarily on human perception and understanding. Qualitative research arose out of the desire to document and understand the scope and impact of being human and the human experience (Lancy, 1993). As a form of natural inquiry, qualitative research is appropriate for studies in social sciences and professions such as nursing, teaching, and social work. It has also been used to study groups of people or populations (De Chesnay, 2014; Landrum, Garza, & Guilbeau, 2017; Keenan, Limone, & Sandoval, 2017). For example a researcher may study perceptions of efficacy for first-year college students, or prisoners on adapting to life after release from prison, or psychologists on the benefits of a treatment protocol (Ellis, 2014; Frank, Omstead, & Pigg, 2012; Swain, Behura, & Dash, 2017). Qualitative research is interpretive, experiential, situational, and personalistic

(Stake, 2010). At its root is the desire by scholars to gain higher understanding through the disciplines of psychology, anthropology, and sociology for the need to study phenomena in the human experience as it happens.

Qualitative research incorporates a variety of approaches such as phenomenology, ethnography, narrative, and case studies. Qualitative research is also sometimes referred to as interpretive research. It is a method that allows the researcher to qualify the impact of human behavior which requires continuous interpretation (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Lancy, 1993).

Qualitative research relies on defining and redefining the meanings of what people experience and what the researcher observes (Stake, 2010). This is opposed to quantitative research methods that seek to statistically identify variables that determine cause and effect in a controlled environment. Lancy (1993) identifies the basic characteristics that define qualitative research; in qualitative studies the researcher chooses a topic or issue to be studied and the themes emerge as part of the research. The investigator or researcher is the principal “instrument” for data collection and the topic determines the participants and locations of the research. The research process is designed to intrude as little as possible in the normal lives of the participants. In qualitative research, the researcher recognizes their own biases and uses a wide-lens to capture the subjective reality of the participants. Qualitative research utilizes a narrative format and typically lasts for several months and possibly years (Lancy, 1993).

Qualitative research has been used in a variety of disciplines. As previously stated some examples of qualitative methodologies include narrative research, grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, and phenomenology. As a method of research, phenomenology is rooted in psychology and philosophy and describes the lived experiences of individuals about a common particular phenomenon. Qualitative inquiry is rooted in exploring the human perception and

understanding of shared or lived experiences, understanding what works and the impact and essence of those experiences (Stake, 2014).

This study sought to understand the impact and relevance of leadership coaching on newly appointed assistant principals. Leadership coaching was the shared experience or phenomenon of this group. This study was experiential and situational, which are unique characteristics of qualitative study (Stake, 2010). A phenomenological method was appropriate and well suited for this inquiry into the shared experience of leadership coaching among educators.

Phenomenology

Over 100 years ago in his work on phenomenology Edmund Husserl (1913) describes phenomenology as “a substratum of empirical psychology, a sphere comprising ‘immanent’ descriptions of a psychical mental process, a sphere comprising descriptions that – so the immanence in question is understood – are strictly confined within the bounds of internal experience” (Husserl, 1913, p.19). In the decades since Husserl's work researchers have continued to document and understand that internal experience.

In the years following World War I, Husserl continued to develop a philosophy and understanding of the essence of the human experience especially in the light of carnage of war. Phenomenology developed as a methodology as psychologists sought to understand the “phenomenon” that many people experienced during the war. Phenomenology struggled as a viable alternative to traditional scientific research through the 20th century (Groenewald, 2004). Similarly, another psychologist produced an important work after World War II. Viktor Frankl was a prominent psychologist in Germany. He was also Jewish. Frankl spent the war in a German concentration camp. After the war, Frankl analyzed, reflected and wrote about his

experience in his work *Man's Search for Meaning*. This book (1959) examined the impact and meaning to be derived from the shared phenomenon of life in a concentration camp.

Over the course of the last century, many scholars have used phenomenology in researching the human experience. Throughout that century of research, there are several features that characterize phenomenological research. Phenomenological research typically involves interviews with people who have experienced a particular phenomenon. Other methods of data collection may be used such as journals, session notes, session logs, goal worksheets, and personality or psychological profiles created by the participants. Whether the data is by way of interviews, focus groups, or other artifacts the study should include thick descriptions of the experiences of the participants as it relates to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2010).

Phenomenological research follows a systematic method of data collection that moves from narrow units of analysis to broad units and concepts. It includes deep descriptions and entails what and how the participants have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Giorgi (1989) stated that there are four characteristics in all phenomenological research. The research must be descriptive; it must use phenomenological reduction also known as bracketing; the research must explore the relationship between persons and situations; and that it should explore the essence of meaning in those human experiences. He later asserted that there are three interlocking characteristics that define phenomenology: phenomenological reduction, description, and the search for essences (Giorgi, 1997). Phenomenological reduction or bracketing is the process of the researcher acknowledging and recognizing their beliefs, perceptions, and biases concerning the subject or topic of the research. Reflection and acknowledgement of those biases is intended to minimize any influence on the research.

Van Manen (1990) describes phenomenology as philosophy of consciousness that it begins in the “life-world” (p. 7). He emphasizes that phenomenological research brings reflective awareness to the nature of events that people experience. The research contributes to the thoughtfulness and ability of the individual to act and interact with others, in other words to grow and change. He called the experience of human science research the “curriculum of being and becoming” (p. 7).

Phenomenology requires the researcher to collect and code data from participants’ words, as concepts and statements begin to emerge. The researcher develops concepts of meaning surrounding these recurring and significant statements. From these recurring statements, themes emerge; through these emergent themes the researcher develops a thick description of the essence of the experience for the participants incorporating what and how they have experienced the phenomenon. This is the culmination of the phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenology as a methodology is extremely versatile in studying across many disciplines. In educational research, it has also been a valuable tool in understanding the experiences of educational professionals and the processes, actions, and initiatives that have improved schools, educators, and student achievement. For example, in 2015 Barr and Nieuwerburgh researched the impact and experiences of coaching on teachers in Scotland. This study was a qualitative phenomenology using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyze the data. The study utilized semi-structured interviews to gather data of the participants’ experiences with coaching training. A phenomenological study was done in 2016 by Moore, Latimer, and Villate on professional growth of teacher leaders. This study analyzed student papers on professional growth and goals of students in their final year of teacher preparation

programs, serving as their comprehensive exam for their master's degree. The study sought to examine the perception of the importance of teacher leadership.

Phenomenology explores the human experience. Phenomenology was an appropriate methodology for this study to examine leadership coaching as a form of professional learning. The study used semi-structured interviews and artifacts created in the coaching process to examine the impact and meaning of this experience for newly appointed assistant principals in their first year.

Research Questions

This study researched the leadership coaching as professional learning for assistant principals in the following ways:

1. In what ways, if any, does leadership coaching help newly appointed assistant principals address challenges faced in their professional role?
2. In what ways, if any, does leadership coaching develop leadership capacity and self-efficacy in newly appointed assistant principals?
3. What are newly appointed assistant principals' perceptions of leadership coaching as a useful and viable form of professional learning?

Research Design

Interpretive Framework and Worldviews

A constructivist and pragmatic worldview framed the research. Constructivism assumes that individuals seek to construct meaning and understanding from the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2014). It is a philosophy which asserts that individuals conceptually seek to "make sense" of the world around them by constructing a reality from their lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Lincoln and Guba also assert that through the organization of lived experiences the individual or "constructor" is able to crystallize experiences in the mind, reflect

on them, make meaning out of them, and communicate them to others (p. 29). In this study, this framework is reflected in the first two questions that the researcher asked. The data collected was analyzed to determine if the participants' experience is able to be constructed to have an impact on their new roles and on their efficacy to perform in those roles.

Refer to Figure 1, which represents a constructivist conceptual framework in expressing the cyclical connectivity of personal and professional growth and learning. This growth leads to improved leadership and a positive school culture, which in turn leads to overall school improvement and ultimately student success. The goal or mission of any educational institution or organization is student achievement and student success. This graphic reflects an underlying constructivist conceptual framework. Constructivist individuals seek meaning in the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meaning of their experiences, meanings directed toward objects, things, or phenomena (Creswell, 2014). In this case, that phenomenon is the experience of leadership coaching. My experiences as an educator, administrator, and certified leadership coach have informed my beliefs that continuous personal and professional growth improve my skills and competencies. This, in turn, has improved plans, operations, and instructional programs in which I have been involved in improving my leadership and contributing to school success. This belief can be connected to Bandura's (1997) theories on self-efficacy and the belief that professional growth and learning improves the leadership capacity of an individual and in turn, results in improved school growth and achievement.

A pragmatic worldview is also framed in the research. The research sought to understand and discover what is working as professional learning for each individual. For the purpose of this

study, this relates to the third question of the study; ascertaining the validity in the perception of the participants of leadership coaching as professional learning.

Pragmatism arises out of actions, situations, and outcomes. Pragmatic worldview is concerned with applications and solutions to problems. Pragmatists want to know what works (Patton, 1988). Pragmatism seeks solutions; leadership coaching seeks solutions as well. The coaching process lends itself to a pragmatic point of view. The desired outcome for coaching and professional learning, in general, is to improve, to achieve, and to build leadership capacity in individuals. Through the coaching process, the client is continually questioned to reflect on practice and set goals. The coach acts an accountability partner in moving clients to discover what is working for them and what areas need to be worked on. For these reasons pragmatism also serves as a theoretical framework for this study.

There are inherent biases and subjectivities from every researcher. We all have our own unique experiences and perceptions of life, humanity, society, actions, and people based on those experiences. My perspective and biases are those of a male, raised to believe in the value of education as the ultimate social equalizer and expression of individual achievement. In addition, I have worked in several schools, but all within a single district. The policies and procedures and practices of that district present a singular perspective in regard to teacher and administrative practices in the field. Now serving as a Principal in that district my view, scope and expectations of the performance of assistant principals is also subjective. As someone who has participated in leadership coaching both as a coach and client, I formed beliefs and opinions about its effectiveness, purpose, and process that present a bias as to its practice and benefits.

Because unavoidable subjectivities and biases of researchers in regard to their research the researcher must have the ability to recognize and identify these biases, philosophical views,

and beliefs and acknowledge the possibility of his influence on the practice and process of research (reflexivity). Part of the research process must include phenomenological reduction or bracketing in order to limit these subjectivities and biases from influencing the research. Bracketing is the process of recognizing one's biases and preconceptions and setting them aside (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

In this study reflexivity, journaling, and documentation in the final dissertation were utilized to achieve bracketing. The initial inclusion of the discussion of preconceptions and biases in regard to leadership coaching is evidence of reflexivity. Bracketing also occurred through peer review the researchers sessions, notes, and documents which occurred on a monthly basis.

In addition, to further address these perceptions, subjectivities, and biases, research following a prescribed, tested, and approved methodology will be used. This includes acceptable peer-reviewed practices of data collection, analysis, reporting and archiving. In addition, member checking by colleagues of practices and process will be utilized by certified leadership coaches working with participants from the district leadership academy. Participant data used for this study will be collected from participants who will be coached by other certified coaches working with participants from the DLA which will minimize influences, subjectivities, and biases of the author of this study.

Context

A newly redesigned leadership academy of a large and diverse suburban school district in Georgia framed the context of the study. In the past 15 years, the school district has experienced unprecedented growth. The district has an average of 33% of students

who qualify for free or reduced meals but also has concentrations of schools where that percentage is much higher including six Title I schools (five elementary schools and one middle school). The student population has exceeded 42,000 and the district is the county's largest employer with more than 4,000 teachers and staff members. The school district has 41 schools including traditional school settings, preschools, an alternative school and a special education support center.

The district is predominately Caucasian and middle to upper-middle-class socioeconomic status. The district has a significant Hispanic minority population and pockets of students from a low socioeconomic status. Growth has increased the number of leadership positions available in the district with the addition of new schools. The district was selected because of its implementation of leadership coaching as part of the professional learning in the district's four leadership academies. The district leadership academies have been established as a support program for those seeking promotion to school leadership positions. The district has four leadership academies. DLA1 is designed for teacher leaders who wish to be promoted to assistant principal. DLA2 is designed for support of newly appointed assistant principals in their first year of service as assistant principals. DLA3 is for current assistant principals who wish to be considered for promotion to principal, and DLA4 is designed for support and professional learning of principals in their first year of service in that role. The district will only select current employees for promotion if they have participated in the leadership academies. The district has made intentional effort to hire outside the district for leadership positions in order to diversify leadership within the district. Traditionally these hires would be lateral; someone serving as an AP or principal in another district would be hired for the same position within the district.

Participants

Homogeneous purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013) was used in the selection of participants. Participants of the study included new assistant principals in the suburban school district of Atlanta. All participants will be members of the District Leadership Academy's New Assistant Principal cohort (DLA2) and will be included in all professional learning activities planned by district staff. The leadership academy class was comprised of 18 newly appointed assistant principals; six at the elementary level, two at the middle school level, and 10 at the high school level appointed for the 2017-2018 school year. There is no specific requirement for the number of participants that should participate in a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2014). The key for a phenomenological study is not the number of participants but the depth of description that the participants provide. Dukes (1984) recommends between three and 10 participants. This study involved five participants; three from elementary school, one from middle school and one from high school. This was to provide a diversity of experience associated with the developmental levels of students in addition to the address the variety of responsibilities associated with each level. The researcher, as a certified coach, was involved in coaching in the DLA; however, none of the clients of the researcher were involved in this study. There were only two middle school level participants in DLA2; as such, they were both invited to participate. The district coordinator is responsible for the assignment of coaches and makes selections based on perceived compatibility and needs of the clients. The remaining invitees for the study were randomly assigned by the district DLA coordinator. For invitees who declined, requests were extended to remaining DLA participants in order to maintain the desired level of five participants.

Leadership coaching has been one of the professional learning strategies offered to the participants in the DLA for two years. Leadership coaching is available to any of the DLA participants at any level. Participants were coached by Georgia PSC endorsed coaches in educational leadership. There are three coaches operating in the DLA, two of whom coached the five participants in this study. The coaches are also district employees. The researcher is from a neighboring district and coached five participants in the DLA but did not coach any of the participants of this study. One of the coaches is an active assistant principal and one serves at the district level in a leadership capacity. All coaches, including the researcher, hold a PSC coaching endorsement and were trained in transformative leadership coaching as part of an endorsement program at Kennesaw State University.

Data Collection

Phenomenological research is concerned with the lived experience of the people engaged in a particular phenomenon. The research seeks to describe the phenomenon and in what ways if any it has affected and impacted the participants who have experienced it (Husserl, 1913; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Van Manen, 1990). The data to document this effect and impact is within the perspective of the participants (Groenewald, 2004). The researcher used several methods to collect the data such as interviews, session notes, coaching plans, and other hermeneutic artifacts, or texts, to gather data.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants. The purpose of conducting interviews is not only to gain demographic information but also to inform and ascertain the perceptions of the participants related to the phenomenon (Van Mannen, 1990). For this study interview questions focused on the participants' perception of their self-efficacy and capacity and the role of leadership coaching and its impact on a variety of leadership skills and competencies

needed for a person in their role. Participants were administered three interviews. There was an initial pre-interview in which participants ranked their perception of their own competency in a variety of skills and tasks. In addition, they were asked open-ended questions regarding their thoughts, expectations, and understanding of leadership coaching, their leadership capacity and the demands of their position. A benchmark or mid-point interview focused on the same perceptions, and a post-process interview asked for reflections of the process and determined limitations and satisfaction with the process. The intervals addressed the first question of this study and revealed perceptions on whether the phenomenon has any impact over time for the participants in facing the challenges of their new role as a school leader. The post process interview also addressed the third question of this study to reveal the perception of the participants as to the usefulness and viability of leadership coaching as an ongoing form of professional learning. Interview protocol and question lists are included; see Appendix A.

In addition to the interviews, there were several documents and tools utilized during the coaching process that provided data. These included session notes, goal worksheets, coaches' reflection logs, and client reflection logs. The purpose for using these texts was to provide concrete artifacts for the coach and client to document and guide the session. These documents also recorded progress and areas of development and provided accountability for the coach and client. For example, during a session a client may repeat a phrase or word several times such as "I feel guilty." The coach may note that the client used this phrase or referred to "guilt" five times in discussing a certain topic such as time management. This may emerge as a theme that the client may wish to address or an insight into addressing the competencies in this area for the client. The documents and tools provided insight into the clients' perceived impact of the coaching experience as it occurred.

The following is a description of the model used for conducting individual coaching sessions. Participants received between eight and ten coaching sessions over a four-month period. Coaches met one on one with a specific client. The coaching process incorporated the individual needs and goals in early assessments during one on one sessions with the client and coach. These initial sessions included discussion of the coaching contract, the setting of norms of operation, and the introduction of the professional and personal inventory and skills assessments. Subsequent sessions utilized personal and professional reflection and the setting of SMART goals used within a GROW (Goal, Reality, Options, Will) coaching model (Whitmore, 2002) that ensured that the time spent in coaching conversations involved action, reflection, and proactive planning on the part of the coach and the client. Through this individual approach, the skills of the individual leaders were assessed and their experiences documented. The steps in the coaching process can be found in Appendix B.

It was important that the coaches remained consistent in practice in each session. A key component of the coaching process was to understand that the coach and the client were equals working in collaboration to develop and discover the solutions that are within the client. Another critical factor for success in the coaching process was establishing a trusting relationship between the coach and the client. Continual reinforcement of confidentiality was necessary to contribute to the development of trust within the coach-client relationship. The key technique for a coach is questioning. Appropriate and skillful questioning technique was vital to success in identifying and clarifying the appropriate areas for skill development, goals, and areas for professional development.

A typical session started with establishing the parameters of the session which always began with a statement assuring the client that the session was confidential. The coach then

guided conversation to reviewing goals and progress from previous sessions. The session next moved to determining progress toward goals set from the last session and through questioning determining if new areas for development were to be pursued. The session then moved to setting appropriate goals and establishing accountability measures and timelines for those goals. The session focused on areas for improvement that were determined by the client and exposed through reflection and questioning by the coach. The discovery of these areas was one of self-realization by the client. Sessions wound down with summarizing the progress of the session and restating of the agreed upon goals, actions, and timelines. The coach checked for satisfaction with the progress and outcome of the session and set the time, location, and the date for the next session.

Data Analysis

Responses to interviews were collected, compiled, and transcribed after each interview. The data were loaded into the NVivo qualitative data analysis program and coded to identify themes and common experiences to support or refute an increase in participant leadership efficacy and improvement. Copies of textual data such as session notes, reflection logs, and worksheets were copied, collected weekly, and scanned into NVivo to be coded as part of the archives and analyzed to identify themes that emerged, thus determining the essence of the perception of leadership coaching as a form of professional learning.

Figure 5 is a representation of the anticipated reduction of data for this study. The data reduction represents a framework for the analysis of the data. Specifically, as data is analyzed and coded the researcher must maintain awareness of the questions that are being explored as related to the phenomenon under study.

Primary Research Question	Context of Study	Topics	Questions	Units of Meaning	Emergent Themes
In what ways does leadership coaching impact learning and efficacy of assistant principals	Five newly appointed assistant principals in the same school district	Perspectives of profession Learning Perspectives of leadership capacity	What types of professional learning is effective? What does leadership coaching impact leadership capacity?	Identification and coding of interviews	Developed perceptions from the extraction of data

Figure 5: Anticipated data reduction

Timeline

Data collection took place continuously during the time period that clients are coached. Sessions began in March of 2018 and concluded in June of 2018. Participants received at least 10 coaching sessions over this time period. Data entry and coding took place weekly in an ongoing basis to build an archive. Following the conclusion of the sessions, there was an eight-

week period of analysis and reporting of the findings, July 2018-August 2018. Conclusions were then documented and presented in the fall of 2018.

Ethics, Confidentiality, and Trustworthiness

All research was conducted according to the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) guidelines for research involving human subjects. Additionally, research was approved by Internal Review Boards (IRB) from both Kennesaw State University and the District in which the research was conducted to ensure that research is conducted appropriately. Participants were coached by one of four leadership coaches certified by the Georgia PSC. Coaches were certified as part of the Kennesaw State University coaching certification in graduate studies EDCO 7010-7030. The selected participants for this study included at least three at elementary level, one at the middle school level, and one at the high school level. The participants were coached by one of the two other certified coaches involved in the DLA and not by the author of this study. There was a collegial relationship between researchers and coaches involved in this study. All confidentiality in review of data and information from participants remained confidential, in addition, researchers and coaches were not evaluators. Coaching in and of itself is not an evaluation process. The confidentiality of participant data was not used to rank or evaluate coaches. Participants' confidentiality was maintained throughout by the use of a numbering system to identify participants. In addition to a numbering system to ensure confidentiality, participants were asked to provide other demographic data such as years of teaching experience and gender.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants of the study. Participants were provided with the aims of the study, the information collected from the study, and the intended use of the study. All information collected will remain anonymous, and only demographic data

within the survey will identify differences in participants. At no time were actual participant names collected or linked to particular responses aside from names associated with methods of communication. Any contact lists or other identifying communications were deleted upon completion of collection of data. The named use of all participating entities, including individual school districts, also remained confidential during this process.

In addition to informed consent, clients signed a coaching contract/agreement when coaching began outlining setting the terms, protections, and expectations for coaching sessions as part of the study (see Appendix C).

Limitations

Limited participants and district familiarity are limiting factors. Since participants are all from the same district, prior district policies and practices may have impacted options for improvement that participants may take. Participants may have felt restricted by policy to attempt new or different methods for improvement other than what is considered to be acceptable. Because the coaching process was part of the professional learning offered to the members of the DLA, participants may have seen participation as a requirement and view it as something in which they must progress. Leadership coaching must be something in which the client participates voluntarily—something that an individual seeks to improve based on personal needs—and should not be something in which the client feels he or she must improve. In addition, the client may feel compelled to align areas for improvement with areas they feel the district views as important. This may also impact the study in that participants may have felt compelled to participate as part of their professional responsibilities as participants in the DLA. It may have also discouraged participants from reporting or documenting perceptions that they may see as negative for the district.

Another factor along these lines is familiarity with personnel. Because several of the certified coaches are employed within the districts there may have been a concern that the participant was being evaluated rather than being coached. This may have caused participants to be cautious or hesitant in responses to interview questions. Because some of the coaches may be perceived to be higher in the organization or that they are supervisors in addition to being coaches, the participants may have hesitated to reveal areas where they felt they needed to improve.

In addition, credibility and trustworthiness are sometimes questioned in qualitative studies in general. Strategies such as triangulation and member checking were used to address validity and reliability concerns. Multiple data sources were used to create triangulation. These includes interviews, session notes from both the client and the coach, goal sheets, and reflection logs. Member checking was conducted as part of the interview process with the sharing of results reviewed by participants. In addition, all documents created during the coaching process were available for review by clients/participants at each session.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter provides data analysis from the five participants of this study. The participants received leadership coaching as part of the districts leadership academy. Participants are newly appointed assistant principals serving in their first year as assistant principals. They represent each level of the district; elementary, middle, and high school. Each participant provided a survey responses from a survey conducted by the district as they began the district leadership academy, and two interviews. One interview was conducted during the coaching process and one was conducted at the conclusion of the coaching process and district leadership academy.

Analysis

The process of data analysis involves breaking data in to parts without losing the context of the phenomenon as a whole (Hycener, 1999). This study involved a five step process adapted by Groenewald (2004, pp. 49-50). Based on Hyceners steps for the explication of data, and are expressed in figure 5 below.

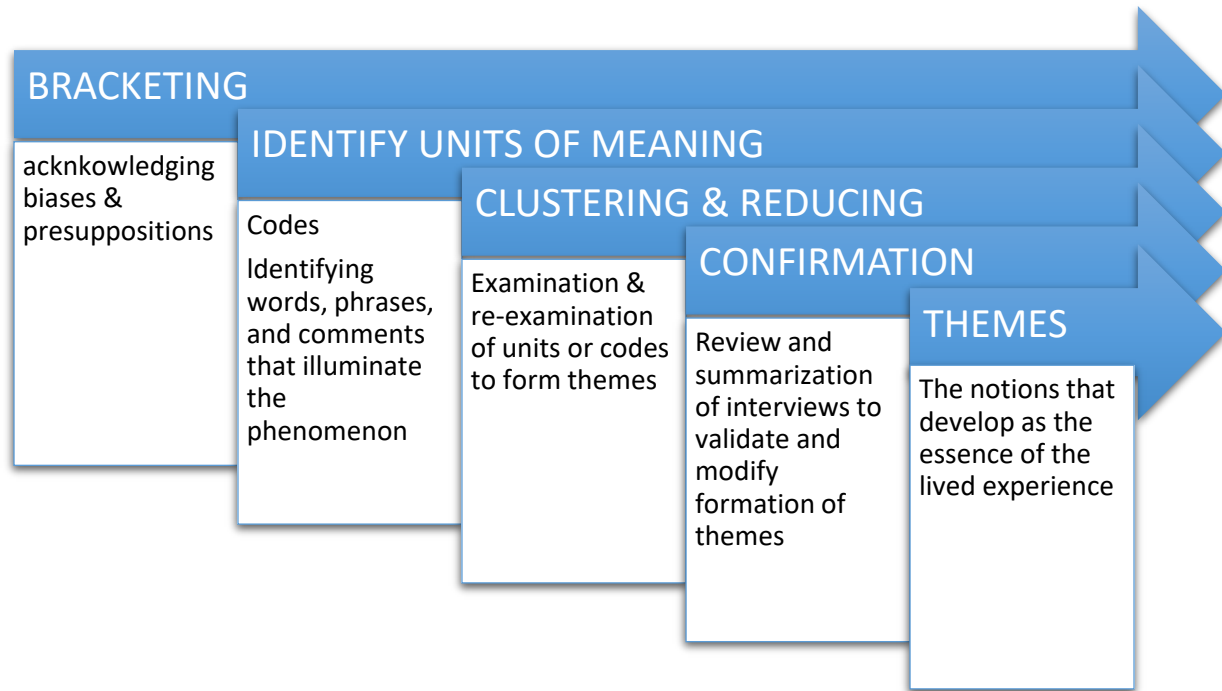


Figure 6: Process of data analysis, adapted from Groenewald (2004)

These steps are at the same time overlapping and continuously progressing as the researcher reflects on the feelings and perceptions expressed by the participants.

Bracketing: Researcher Perspective Regarding Etic Themes and Biases

In order to accurately interpret the data from this study, it was necessary for the researcher to bracket prior knowledge, assumptions, beliefs, positions, and biases in regard to the topic under study. Bracketing is the process of the researcher holding personal preconceptions or beliefs in abeyance to keep these assumptions from influencing or shaping data collection or analysis (Crotty, 1996; Polit & Beck, 2008). Bracketing takes place throughout the research to suspend the foreknowledge of the researcher in order to prevent that knowledge from influencing the participants' understanding of the phenomenon (Priest, 2002). Husserl (1913) first introduced an objective reductionist or *epoche* (bracketing) approach to researching phenomena

in order to get past the researcher's everyday beliefs in order to attend to the phenomenon that is being researched (Fischer, 2009).

Bracketing involves the researcher practicing reflexivity and hermeneutic interpretation. Reflexivity refers to the researcher looking back on how he formed particular understandings. This goes beyond recognizing beliefs, following procedures, and reflection. It involves being continually conscious of the data, the effects, and interpretation of data and in framing and forming the process and paradigms of the research (Fischer, 2009). Hermeneutic interpretation refers to understanding that we are all interpreters of our world. We create a co-meaning of all aspects of our lives by the interactions within it. As researchers, we must be aware and attentive to our own meaning-making as we develop questions and research instruments. We must be aware of our own meanings as we gather and analyze data and in efforts to keep our beliefs and interpretations of our subject from influencing the research as a whole (Fischer, 2009).

Bracketing is an ongoing process and only ends when the research project has ended. Bracketing strategies must be intentional and continual to ensure that the results of the research are based on the participants' interpretations and descriptions and not the sole interpretation of the researcher (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). Hamill and Sinclair highlighted several strategies that researchers may use to achieve bracketing;

- **A pre-assessment for awareness of perceptions** – to document knowledge and perceptions of the subject and create awareness of them to revisit over the duration of the study.
- **Keeping a research journal** - to document your reflections and continually scrutinize your position in relation to emerging themes.

- **Continually check the study** for credibility, dependability, auditability, and transferability.
- **Supervisor support** - feedback from the committee as to the interpretation of data.
- **Peer support and review** - peer and co-researcher review of interviews and questions to identify researcher influence or leading questions.
- **Participant feedback** - checking with participants to make sure meanings and responses reflect the view of the participant and not the interpretation of the researcher and that views are not misrepresented.
- **Referencing** - checking the literature review and references to make sure themes have not emerged without proper evidence.

For this study, several strategies were used in order to achieve bracketing. The study was first conceived after participation in leadership coaching certification program at Kennesaw State University, which culminated in a capstone project on leadership coaching. The project was done with a research cohort from which my two co-coaches were recruited. The following bracketing strategies that have been used in this study: peer review, reflexive documentation of prior knowledge, and supervisory support. All three of these practices are a form of reflexivity and hermeneutic interpretation.

Over the course of the last two years, the aspects, preconceptions, biases, and knowledge and understanding of leadership coaching has been continually reviewed and critiqued by peer coaches and educators. These reviews included constructs and examination of worldviews and frameworks for constructing research and developing research questions. Meetings and reviews have occurred monthly over the last two years and continued until the conclusion of this study.

In addition, the researcher has continually reviewed personal beliefs, presuppositions, concepts, and knowledge of leadership coaching. Personal beliefs and biases were continuously reflected upon and checked as a continual process of conducting coaching sessions for professional educators. This in itself as a practice of transformational coaching is a necessary safeguard for leadership coaches when working with clients, and is documented in various session notes from coaching sessions. Development of the concept, proposal, and interviews, were also reviewed by committee personnel for approval. In addition, continual reflexive practice and consultation with committee members has been ongoing throughout the research process.

Member checking was also used as a form of bracketing and triangulation. Member checking is the process of confirming that the meaning of statements or answers to questions are an accurate reflection of their intended meaning (Stake, 2010). Participants in interviews and throughout the coaching process were continually asked for clarification on key questions and statements. Participants also reviewed artifacts and session notes to clarify and verify meaning. In addition, at the conclusion of the study each participant was contacted and provided with general results and statements related to the conclusions of the study. Participants were asked to provide clarifying statements, and verify intended meanings, and to confirm that their intended meanings, perceptions and beliefs have been accurately represented.

Parallel participant member checking was also used as a bracketing method. During the course of the study, the researcher was also participating in the active coaching of newly appointed assistant principals who were not participants in this study. Although they were not participants they did share a similar experience and were asked similar questions in regard to their experience. Conversations and sessions with these individuals also included clarification

and verification questioning. Finally, an extensive review of the literature and references was continuously conducted to ensure that themes and findings were confirmed with evidence from the literature.

Identifying units of meaning

Though the interview questions sought addressed directly the research questions of this study, the nature of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to explore, through unscripted and follow up questions, participants' perceptions and gain a depth of understanding of the full experience of the participants and leadership coaching. From these interviews, the initial coding of data was reduced to 20 initial units and codes. The assignment of codes and the variety of expressed perceptions are represented in the table of coding density (Table 1)

Table 1

Coding Frequency

Code	Occurrences
Efficacy	416
Confidence	286
Coaching	284
Skills	239
Personalized Learning	190
Professional Learning	190
Growth	140
Relationships	126
Duties	115
Experience	91
Trust	90
Communication	68
Reflection	58
Frustration	52
Practices	44
Influence	40
Questions	38
Weaknesses	31
Strengths	24
Power Statements	4

These codes were extracted from participant interviews where the researcher's initial review looked for phrases and statements of particular meaning. Subsequent reviews of the interviews and codes looked for cross meanings and similarities of sentiment from participants. For example, a participant might use the phrase "I didn't have an understanding of all the duties of an assistant principal". A statement like this would have several units of meaning and could be coded as the perception of lack of efficacy and confidence in the participant's abilities, it is also a statement expressing a lack of skills. It is also a statement that demonstrates frustration, and a lack of development or preparation for the role. The density of the code represents the number of times a phrase or word from a participant was related to the meaning of that code. Additional reviews of the coding was done to differentiate the various ways that the unit could be interpreted in order to gain understanding and context of the meaning of the participant.

Clustering, reduction, and confirmation

Coded data was then reviewed to establish correlations of meanings from phrases or statements of the participants to reduce the data, and develop themes. For example, statements that reflected a lack of confidence in a skill related to job performance that were coded as purely a skill deficiency reflect a deeper meaning for the individuals belief in their confidence and ability to perform as building leader. This process was both continuous and repeated several times and approached by the researcher with different lenses. Through this process the data was reduced to four major themes.

Themes

Continued analysis reduced data to four major themes that emerged: growth, efficacy, coaching process, and personalized learning.



Figure 7: Emergent Themes from Data Analysis on the Impact of Leadership Coaching

Figure 7 represents the connection of the four major themes that emerged from the phenomenon of leadership coaching. For example, one of recurring concepts and themes that emerged into the major themes is in the theme of self-efficacy. Bandura defines the concept as “a person’s belief about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy is further defined by Bandura as the belief in one’s own ability or the ability of one’s colleagues collectively (collective efficacy) to perform a task or achieve a goal. Participants often expressed a feeling of levels of self-confidence, either low or high such as: “I don’t want to say I felt unprepared for, but [something] that I had less experience with, definitely, was communicating with parents,” or, “I did not realize just how many things I would have to manage.” One statement reflects a feeling of preparedness for a specific leadership quality, communications, or a lack of confidence, while the second expresses a feeling of frustration or

being overwhelmed. Both statements indicate the participant's feelings about the ability to complete tasks related to the job and emerge as a theme of efficacy. A summary of each of the four major themes is presented at the end of this chapter after an exploration of how each theme presented itself in the lived experience of each participant in the participant portrayals.

Vignette

The following vignette is a reflection of the researchers experience as an assistant principal that serves as a form of bracketing. It is here as a prequel, if you will, to the portrayals of the participants and the reporting of their perceptions of the same experience. It serves to recognize the researcher's perceptions of his experience of what it means to be an assistant principal and the demands of the job.

The bell rings, the halls are clear. A teacher leaves the mailroom and walks along the main hall of his school. It is quiet, and students fill the classrooms and not the halls. This is his time, a time to plan and tend to business of the day. As he moves he looks at the many pictures of students that line the hall. There are pictures of teenagers involved in many activities and classes; pictures of students performing labs, playing instruments, playing games; pictures that capture the culture and purpose of his school. He is an experienced teacher who has taught at many schools. He has mastered his craft; he is happy. He reflects on his current position. He thinks, "I've been many places, this one feels like home." He has, as he has seen the need, taken on responsibilities beyond his teaching. Though he is willing to help with the needs of the school, he has no ambition, no consideration to move beyond his current position as a teacher--he loves to teach. As he moves down the hall he is joined by an administrator who asks for a moment of his time. "I wanted to talk to you for a moment," she says. "Sure, what's up?" he replies. She continues "We have been talking as an admin team and we feel your talents are being

underutilized.” He knows that is code for, “We have something we need you to do.” He replies, “How can I help?”

The bell rings, the halls are clear. Students are in class; it is the start of a new school year, and he sits in his office wondering how he got here. Less than a year before he was solely a teacher; now he is an administrator, formally educated, but wondering if he is qualified for this job. “What have I gotten into?” he wonders to himself. He knows how to teach but much of what he must know now has little to do with teaching; not only is there an expectation of instructional expertise but expertise in discipline matrices, finance and budget, evaluations, district policies, facilities, communications, safety and security, interviews, testing plans and matrices, and school law. The trainings have been endless; binders of information are stacked on his desk. All summer much of what he has heard has sifted through him as he tries to comprehend what is necessary to complete the jobs and tasks he has been assigned by his principal. His plan for the day includes monitoring roster verification for day one and drafting the mid-month testing plan. As he logs on to his computer his radio squawks: “An administrator is needed in room 118 for an issue with a student,” and so his day begins.

The bell rings, the halls are clear. Students are in class for exams; it is the last day of the school year, and he sits in his office amazed that he has made it. He knows he can do the job; he can impact and facilitate learning and student success. He thinks back on this year; the learning curve was steep. He had colleagues and training which he could refer to and call on. He wonders how steep the curve will be in year two. Many of the binders from last summer are still on his desk, hardly touched. Much of his training did not prepare him for his actual job. The answers came--some he sought and was able to find, some came from colleagues, most came from living the experience--and there was no training that can prepare you, he thought.

Flexibility is the key he thought, every day is different. As he logged on to his computer to write an agenda for a meeting with counselors to review failure lists and summer school enrollment his phone rings: “You have a call from a parent. They want a grade changed in one of their student’s classes because they say the student has not been treated fairly by the teacher,” says the school secretary. “Put them through,” he replies. And so his day begins.

Participant Portrayals

The following are portrayals of the five study participants. Participant data was collected as part of six surveys and 12 interviews of the participants. The surveys were collected as existing data from the district. One survey per participant was administered prior to coaching and data collection as part of normal district professional learning data. Each participant received approximately eight coaching sessions. An interview was conducted at the conclusion of the coaching sessions in addition to an interview being conducted at the approximate mid-point of the coaching sessions. Each portrayal has a designator in brackets for the participant. The letters of the designation represent the level of the participant; ES = elementary, MS = middle school, HS = high school. The number designation represents the random order selection by level from the study participant list, but does not represent their order identification as participants since they have been separated by level.

[ES-1] is a female from New England who moved to Georgia several years ago. She has taught multiple grades in both middle and high school. She now serves as an assistant principal at an elementary school. She is in her early thirties and has less than 10 years of experience in education. A primary feeling of hers is being overwhelmed by the unforeseen. She struggles with dealing the barrage of issue that arise on a daily basis for which she is unprepared.

[ES-2] is a female who is a lifelong resident of the district in which she works. She has previously served in special services for students with disabilities as a teacher and facilitator. She has more than 10 years of experience in education and is passionate about serving students with disabilities. She expresses that she enjoys her assignment as an elementary assistant principal.

[ES-3] is a female who has lived in the southeastern United States for her whole life but is a recent resident of Georgia and her district. She has less than 10 years of experience in education. She expressed that she enjoys her assignment as an elementary school assistant principal but was surprised by the unknown duties and responsibilities that came with the position.

[MS-1] is a female who is a lifelong resident of the district in which she works. She is now an assistant principal at the middle school that she attended. She has less than 10 years of experience in education. She finds her new role very challenging and expresses that part of this is a reflection of her personality. She describes herself as a perfectionist and desires order in everything she does and the operations that surround her.

[HS-1] is a female and another lifelong resident in the district in which she works. She is in her mid-forties and has developed many relationships within the district where she works. She describes her assignment as a high school assistant principal as highly enjoyable. She has more than 10 years of experience in education and expresses that the relationships she holds in the district are her greatest strength.

Emergent Emic Themes

Growth

Growth refers to the participants' increase or change over time in their skills, leadership capacity, and perceived ability to perform their job. In the proceeding portrayals, participants

expressed their perceptions of how the phenomenon of leadership coaching contributed to their personal growth and development as a leader. Participants indicated that growth occurred in a variety of skills and competencies that were related to each individual's strengths and weaknesses. Several participants indicated a feeling of being overwhelmed with the multitude of tasks they were now required to perform as an assistant principal. For many of these skills they had little or no practical training; for example, conducting a code of conduct policy violation by a student, or student discipline. Many expressed feelings of anxiety in communicating with parents. The participants expressed that leadership coaching, specifically the setting of goals, and personal reflection contributed to growth and an increase in capacity to perform new skills and competencies.

For assistant principal ES-1 the unforeseen in the daily work of the assistant principal was a surprise; this is not uncommon in education. The transition for educators from teacher to a leadership position is often difficult. The unseen, the operations, that go on behind the scenes were shocking to her as she assimilated to new responsibilities. She expressed this in the following ways:

I would love more development on how to deal with certain situations that come up. So far I have had several "firsts" this year. Having the opportunity to work through these situations and hone my communication skills would be very beneficial...You really have to prioritize as an administrator. I think learning that was something that I had to learn. I tried really hard to make sure I am correctly prioritizing the way that I'm spending my time, but the situations come up and, you know... I'll be honest, I felt maybe a little unprepared to deal with that at first because it was like "Oh, goodness. They're calling for an administrator. Okay, that's me now, I need to go down, and, okay.... how do I help them

deescalate.” There's an emergency going on, that takes priority over anything else that's going on, so kind of being able to balance that and understanding that, okay, that's safety of the kids and that comes first...I like that I don't know exactly what my day is going to hold and I think sometimes that's a good thing, and sometimes that's a ... Oh, it's a long day, you know. But I really, I enjoy that aspect. Makes that time management piece, though, a little more difficult when you don't know what your day is going to hold.

This assistant principal also recognized that she had many areas where she had room to improve, grow, and increase both her skill set and her leadership capacity. The challenge of stepping back as an administrator and learning to build relationships and work through others was a particular area she identified for growth:

As an administrator a lot of times I feel like I'm kind of working through other people. If I was having an issue maybe with a teacher who wasn't communicating enough, the parent would reach out to me and then I would have to work through the teacher to come up with a better plan for communication. It was something that I feel like as an administrator you have to learn how to work through others to get your end result, which I mean is the same with students and academics. I'm now a step, I'm outside of the classroom. How you can influence student achievement?

She continued:

I think through leadership coaching I will have the opportunity to better understand myself as a leader. It will help me to realize my strengths as well as areas I need to work on. I would hope to have a coach who could guide me and provide meaningful feedback.

It was also evident that as the year progressed this assistant principal did improve and develop new skills and capacities that allowed her to grow as a leader, as she expounded:

What I've tried to do is at the beginning of every week is, I keep an agenda and a calendar and the beginning of every week ... Actually, on Friday before the week starts, I kind of go through and I see these are the meetings that I have, this is what I know I have to do and then I make a list of everything, like, okay, I need to do this many evaluations maybe this week, and this is my tentative plan.

She concluded, "I think it's what I thought it would be, but also different and I've learned a lot this year."

Participant ES-2 experienced difficulties in the transition from teacher to an assistant principal. Again, the vastness of skills and duties associated with the position overwhelmed her at first as she expressed:

My knowledge isn't as advanced as others in this position. And because it really should be treated as a learning year. It's definitely a big learning curve for new people to the position in terms of understanding all the components of doing this job and doing it well. I took this first year, like I do any new job, more of an introductory and do your very best and learn as you go.

She also experienced growth; an increase in capacity as reflected in this statement, "I'm like, 'I don't know what to do.' But, I really felt like the second semester I really had a handle on things because I felt like I had ownership."

Participant ES-3 approached her position with an open mind, was reflective on how she had grown over the first year as a building leader. She also recognized the impact of coaching on the growth she has experienced and expressed that in the following ways:

You look back and you think, "Wow, I've learned a lot. I've grown a lot. I'm going to do a lot of things different. I'm going to do a lot of things better, but I'm proud of what I've

done." But, I've just got to improve and grow, success for myself is how far I've grown and how I look at things so differently than I ever have. I feel like I've grown as a leader. I've figured out more of, what does it take to be a leader? What does it take to gain the trust of the people around me? Having a coach and the experience and the reflection of it ... I mean, if I didn't grow then I need to find a different career at this point. So, yes, a lot of growth. I've definitely seen the growth in myself as each one of those challenges have presented themselves.

Participant MS-1 expressed a preparedness for her new position and little frustration with early problems. There were still areas for growth she expressed, however, that she was able to assimilate in many areas:

I want to continue to work on my feedback, my courageous conversations with teachers. Early on I'm like, "I don't know what to do." But, I really felt like the second semester I really had a handle on things because I felt like I had ownership. I always knew that the assistant principal had a lot of roles and responsibilities, but I thought that they did not know how to manage all of those responsibilities efficiently. Now, I realize that those many roles and responsibilities are extremely difficult to manage well.

Participant HS-1 feels that her growth was strengthened through the coaching process. She identified areas that needed growth and progressed over the course of her first year as an assistant principal. She expressed her perceptions of her experience with coaching in the following ways:

It's been a whirlwind. Quite the learning curve. I think it's been an amazing experience. My coach actually helped me with a lot of that, just talking about that, how to interact and build up and work with teachers. Even though I had anticipated that being difficult for me, there's

still been things to come up that I didn't necessarily anticipate....specifically with the reflection component. I enjoy reflecting on my own when I have my own time, but this year has gone so fast that I've had to learn so much, that there hasn't been a whole lot of time to reflect. And when I did it was here and there. So, meeting with the coach, and him asking me specific questions, and having me prioritize, and putting it all on me, by asking me specific questions, allowed me to, one, take the time to think about it, to prioritize those things, and then really walk myself through things that I needed to reflect upon. Every session I walked away feeling lighter, and thinking, "I have a plan." Just had me walk through a plan, and there's a timeline, and that was just really nice. I felt lighter, a little bit lifted. Learning how to deal with one situation and then something else comes up that's completely different, the different infractions and how they're reported and who they're reported to. I think it [coaching] would be ongoing in some way or another because I think it has brought about a tremendous amount of growth and it has opened my eyes to some areas of growth that I wasn't aware of before, and I think that we should all continue to grow, and in order to do that I think that reflection process is, you have to do that.

Efficacy and Confidence

As the skills and competencies grew the confidence of the participants in their ability to perform the multitude of tasks required increased. As with growth the participants overwhelmingly expressed that they felt unable and incapable of mobilizing resources to complete the tasks and fulfill the responsibilities required of their position. In fact, in large they expressed that they were completely unprepared and even unaware of exactly what their job entailed. They felt untrained and incapable. A common statement from the participants was "I didn't know what I didn't know." The pace and volume of the work appeared to overwhelm

them as they assumed their roles. The importance of the belief that one can complete a task cannot be understated. Participants expressed that leadership coaching contributed significantly to their confidence or statements of self-belief in their ability, which are expressions of self-efficacy. They repeatedly stated that coaching was highly reflective; they were able to work through the immediate issues they had and find the answers themselves; and they discovered they had the answers within and were able to apply it directly to their jobs. This feeling of confidence and ability to perform increased their performance and leadership capacity.

The challenges of the assistant principal are many. Often the training and experience do not adequately prepare someone for the work of the assistant principal. The skills and abilities that must be exhibited by a school leader in instructional leadership, communications, evaluations, and contributing to school climate are vastly different than those of a classroom teacher. Participant ES-1 feels unprepared for her new role as an assistant principal. Her confidence and belief in her abilities are challenged in her new role, which she expressed in several ways:

I had some previous roles as a teacher being able to be a teacher leader in the building where I did work with grade levels and collecting data and helping teachers to improve, but I feel like jumping into an administrator role, it's such a much more broader picture even. Just understanding, okay, if you have a problem, I have a problem. If your kids aren't succeeding in this classroom, that's my problem too. What are we going to do to solve that?

She continued,

I feel like if I wasn't organized, it would just be like things were just coming at you, coming at you, coming at you, and the instructional piece, which is so important, would

just continue to kind of go to the bottom. I'll be honest. There are some things I don't think you can ever really be ready for as an administrator that I encountered this year that it was like, okay a lot of firsts, lot of firsts this year. There's probably not training for this because I feel like this is one of those jobs where anything can happen at any moment and you can be as... You could have studied and been so prepared and so prepared and maybe you're not prepared for that one specific situation. I felt prepared as far as instruction and that piece of it, but that piece of, okay, you are the guy now, right? If there is an emergency on this campus and everyone is looking at me to kind of make that call of what's happening or are we locking down?

In addition, she expressed the concerns in the lack of confidence that may be held by her staff. As new administrator and new to her school, she felt people were saying:

"I don't know about her. Why is she telling me what to do?" Or even parents: "I don't know if maybe she can handle this situation." Well, I feel like I've come a long way from when I started. The beginning of the year I was one of those, "Are they sure they wanted me to do this?" I feel like I've come a long way and that's due to a lot of things but I think coaching definitely contributed to my confidence. I think I mentioned before that's something that, I don't want to say I'm lacking in confidence but maybe I'm not as confident in myself as I should be, and coaching and working through that...definitely made me feel more comfortable.

Participant ES-2 also expressed varying levels of confidence throughout the year, espousing:

It's not so much knowledge, just more of a feeling of comfort. I think that not having as much experience with the managing, the management part of a school. That was something

I hadn't anticipated that would be a learning curve for me. Because I had minimal experience. More of, I was just, I think for me personally this year, I was more disappointed with how long it took me to get comfortable.

These statements convey a lack of confidence in abilities and leadership capacity as she assumed her new role. As the year progressed and she became comfortable in her role the confidence increased in her ability to perform and mobilize resources to not only complete tasks but improve school operations as evidenced in the following statement:

But then I [began] to feel like this is mine. This is how I can own this, and this is my idea. I'm going to take it here. So it became less about, 'What did you guys do last year?' And more about, 'Okay, what worked? What didn't work? What do we want to change?'

ES-3 expressed doubt and low efficacy as she entered the position of the assistant principal. She had feelings of inadequacy and frustration. She expressed this in the following ways:

To come into a position to not feel as confident, which I knew that would happen as you do when you change positions for anything, but to not feel that ... I felt like I was starting all over completely, a whole new job, instead of just moving into a different position. At the beginning of the year I didn't even know the questions to ask until it happened. And then when it happened it was like, "Oh, if I go ask that I'm going to sound really dumb, like maybe I should know that." I was shocked by how little I knew. I knew there would be a big learning curve. I just was not expecting how big of a learning curve and how there wasn't a lot of wealth of where to go to get the knowledge.

As with other participants, with time, experience, and coaching she expressed the feeling that her confidence and efficacy increased:

My confidence has grown, because having a coach to bounce ideas and well, these are normal questions. Maybe I shouldn't know the answer right now. Maybe I...I'm figuring it out as I go, because I was told multiple times at the beginning, more from a mentor that I had, that, "It's experience." Because I was one of those people that said, "Well, give me something to read. Tell me how to." And they were like, "You'll figure it out. It's just you need some time, you need some time." And that's very true. But I also needed not just a mentor to tell me that, but a coach to walk me through the questioning, like what was going on inside of my brain, to work it out. The confidence level in myself and my ability to do this position and to know I'm on the right track has grown tremendously.

Early in the process participant MS-1 expressed some doubt and lack of confidence, especially with the volume and pace of job responsibilities. She expressed this in the following ways:

I realized there's just a lot of stuff that I had no idea that I would be responsible for....I don't know how to deal with this. I need some suggestions. I have never seen this before, and I do not know how to react. I mean, it is, the pace and the volume of everything. Everything. Not just the student discipline, but the day-to-day stuff, the scheduling, the, hey, you got a minute? Of course, I do, coming in the door. It's a fast-paced environment, and as a classroom teacher, I never saw that, or maybe, at our school, the school I was at, maybe it wasn't as much, which I do suspect it is a bit busier here.

When discussing her perception of her self-efficacy and how she felt about her abilities at the end of her first year she responded:

I think it definitely has increased. Especially having [the coaches] feedback, and guidance, and what's been going on with my program, I feel like, yeah, I definitely got year one under

my belt, and I feel good about it, whereas before, I think we talked a little bit about the learning curve. It's a pretty sharp learning curve. It really is. So I think coaching, in general, it has definitely helped validate some of my opinions and helped me build my skills.

The participant reflected on her perception of leadership coaching and its impact on her beliefs in her ability to complete tasks and duties. HS-1 expressed her feelings about her efficacy and the coaching experience in the following ways:

It's been really hard for me. One, to stay in my lane, figure out where my lane is. Because I do have specific job responsibilities that are my priority, but it all contributes to a bigger picture, so it's hard not to know everything else that everyone else is doing. And it's simply isn't possible to learn it all at once, it takes time, so I've had to learn to be patient with myself. I'll talk about the coaching for a minute. There were moments where I really questioned myself this year, and just by my coach asking me questions, not necessarily giving an opinion, just asking me questions, it made me realize I should probably be more confident in that area, that big picture, I was taking on some things that I probably shouldn't have been taking on, or feeling responsible for certain things that simply weren't my responsibility. So, in that aspect, extremely beneficial. Not knowing exactly what to do every minute of the day. So a little bit of that was just some perfectionism that was difficult for me. I think it probably had to do with myself when I realized what I was reflecting on was my self-confidence and my continual questioning of myself and realizing that I didn't have to do that as much as I was. So that really was an "Aha!" moment for me. But I continue to do it, so it's one of those things that you have to practice.

Coaching Process

The underlying purpose of coaching is to improve and grow people; to work with people to help them reach their full potential. The term “coach” is believed to have been initially started as a slang term for tutor at Oxford University in the 1830s (Morrison, 2010). Alluding to the main form of transportation at the time, the horse drawn carriage also referred to as a coach. The inference is that the coach instructed, guided, and carried a student through exams. The concept of ownership of the individual for his or her own learning is a fundamental concept in leadership coaching (Aguilar, 2013). This feeling was continually expressed by the participants as they attributed their growth and success and perceptions of improvement, confidence, and self-reliance to the coaching process. A common sentiment from the participants was that coaching helped them to find the answers on their own. This belief that the answers are within the individual is the essence of coaching, and thus helped each participant to grow and improve.

As part of the development and professional learning plan for assistant principals, participant ES-1 participated in leadership coaching throughout her first year. She had no understanding of the process or purpose of coaching and associated it with other forms of professional learning, stating:

Through leadership coaching I will have the opportunity to better understand myself as a leader. It will help me to realize my strengths as well as areas I need to work on. I would hope to have a coach who could guide me and provide meaningful feedback.

She explained to the researcher:

When you first approached me about it, my perception of it initially, before we began, was that it would be formal... To be honest, I thought it was going to be kind of rigid, something where maybe you had a set of questions, and I would answer. I think I thought it was going to be more formal than it was.

Later interview responses indicate that coaching impacted her professional learning over the course of her first year in the following ways:

I'll be honest, I try to take the time to reflect, right? That's part of being a good leader is reflecting, but I felt like the coaching cycles really gave me an opportunity to talk it out. Honestly, it made me really kind of be very introspective and really look at myself in the mirror. I feel like it helped me solve my own problems, almost. So I, yeah, I think it's amazing. I feel like everyone should do it.

She shared her perceptions with others:

I feel like it's been really good for me. After our conversations, I've even gone home to my husband and said "Okay, listen to what I found out about myself today." Because taking that time to really reflect, I feel like it's made me a better leader, definitely, but even understand myself better...I would say situations, and I know that's very broad but ... I think it is more of the coaching helps me more with things that would come up so, I'm having a particular issue with maybe an employee, or a parent, or a student. I'll be honest, it kind of morphed into a whole conversation about I guess almost, and this is probably way too personal, my internal struggle about doing enough and just that balance between my family, and making time, and being present enough here. I don't like to sit in my office all day but then of course when you don't do that at all then you have a lot of paperwork on the backend. Really just sorting through I guess that time management piece came in, and being able to, it sounds silly, cut myself a break sometimes. It was almost like without [my coach] telling me, it was like I was finally talking through it and allowing myself to take a breath.

She reflected upon the impact that coaching had on her the past year, stating:

I would really like to continue doing it [coaching] next year. I feel like it helped me sort through things that maybe I didn't even realize were holding me back. Yeah, absolutely. I feel like my time with my coach is more meaningful than me sitting in classes going over PowerPoints of things that may be laws, or things that I already know about. I really need to know how to apply it to my everyday life. Yeah, I definitely feel like it's valuable.

The comments above indicate that this participant felt that coaching as professional learning was highly beneficial to her growth and development in her leadership capacity, which positively impacted her belief in her ability to perform.

Participant ES-2 expressed the impact of leadership coaching on her development and growth. Prior to receiving coaching she expressed little understanding of the purpose or process of coaching. Her reflective statements indicate that leadership coaching increased her self-confidence and the ability to do her job:

My only apprehension about the coaching process was, it was just one more thing to do... my initial response was great, this is one more thing that I have to take on.... it was just more of how am I going to manage this into my life?

Her reflective statements indicate that leadership coaching increased the self-confidence and the ability to do her job and were expressed in the following ways:

Having coaching, I've been able to reach a place of comfort and more confidence at the job tasks that I perform, and the decisions that I make, because of the coaching opportunities. I'm sure you could say, 'It's the end of the year. Of course you should feel better towards the end of the year.' But, regardless, I'm still presented with new experiences...I could say that maybe my brain thinks through things better. Or, I feel like I have support, or I'm able to get support when I'm stuck on finding a solution to problem. And, in a job, or I'm in this

position where it's easy to get overwhelmed, it is nice to have... It's almost like having someone help you organize your thoughts. And, in doing so, it ultimately, it's naturally motivating when you can weed through all of the ... I guess you would call it stressors, or all of the tasks, that you trying to accomplish day to day. And it helps you refocus why ... It helps me refocus on why I'm in this job to begin with. What's my purpose for being here? What's my why?

The participant expressed that leadership coaching helps her to determine her purpose. She also expressed the reflective nature of the coaching process as, “You're supposed to allow the person you're coaching to really make their decisions and you're just guiding and facilitating the process of thinking and reflecting and how to go about making improvements in the classroom.”

She continued to express the positive impact that leadership coaching has had on her, and her desire to continue coaching as ongoing professional learning.

Towards the end of knowing that this coaching experience was coming to the end, my initial response was, would it be possible to continue to receive coaching next year? Because that would be really great. But I don't know what the vision is for the coaching sessions within the district, but I would be one to say that for me, I found positives in receiving coaching and I would like for it to continue into next year. Having that coaching experience or having a coach really just helps you weed through the multiple responsibilities that an administrator has and really to plan things out and put things into action. So it's, you could call it a motivator. You could call it a way to stay on top and stay organized. For me, personally, the experience allowed me to reflect on the why I got into this job. Why is it meaningful and important to me? And helped me stay on my track as my job indicates and my vision for myself as an administrator. I would say that the value

impact would be extremely high. I would say that yes, obviously with any professional learning, there is that learning piece. Whether it's a new program or a deeper understanding, but then outside of that receiving end, there is that application end. I do feel that coaching is probably one of the best tools in helping learners apply what they've learned into their job. I was able to trust that things would remain confidential. I think that if it was someone who I didn't either know as well...Anybody who's going to be a coach within the district needs to be selected with purpose. It really needs to be someone who can, I would like to say we're all trustworthy, but sometimes there is that caution of, oh that person works in the district, I don't wanna say anything or too much that would cloud anybody's judgment. I don't want to say anything that's going to bite me in the butt later down the line. Or say something that's inappropriate as far as being able to speak freely with another professional within the same district. I think that coaching is something that anybody would benefit from and for a leader, I think that every leader should have the opportunity to be coached. So at this time, indefinite would be great. For the rest of my career. But I would definitely say that the next year or maybe two years, just with the new position, continuing learning and growing and working through difficult situations. I don't think those are going to go away. Not by all means in this role. I could see the importance of continuing it. I would say that yes, I would like to be coached another year.

Participant ES-3 was not familiar with leadership coaching or the process and practice of coaching and expressed that with the following statements:

I didn't know what coaching was at all. I mean, not on the leadership side. With coaching we know sports and that kind of stuff. I thought it was going to be more mentor counseling

even though, I know you guys kept preaching it wasn't. So, I didn't quite see where it was going, so, no, I had no idea.

She expressed her feelings on the impact of coaching on her practice as an administrator and her growth and development as a leader, expressing:

Well, I'm definitely being honest. I love the coaching program. Once we did a session or two and I realized, "Okay, she's [the coach] for real," that it's just between us, that I can let my guard down a little bit, it was more beneficial for everyone. The sense of questioning, where you're turning around and, instead of telling somebody the answer, leading them to [give] their own answer, is what I have been also doing with the teachers now, when they come to me, is, "Well, why did you do that? Why are you thinking that?" Or...instead of laying it out there for them, let them come to their own conclusion, long as it's the best conclusion, obviously. Taking what I've learned from her and translating it into what I can do in my everyday life to support our school....it's the way of leading people to their own conclusion, the way of talking and questioning, that you're going to get more out of somebody if they can come to the conclusion themselves than if you just feed it to them.

She continued to explain the benefits and impact that coaching can have on leadership development.

I'm saying that it was very beneficial for me, especially being the first year, trying to get my footing, not quite understanding the job. That's the honest truth about it, not understanding all that it entails. And to have someone that can just help me work through those things without telling me the answer, and showing me how to find the answers on my own, it was wonderful. I think it was a great thing, and I definitely think we should continue. I would be scared not to have a coach at this point. I think that it's something our district really needs to consider and realize that assistant principals, and I'm sure principals

too, are all on...they're on an island. And we don't need to leave them on an island. I think it's effective, and the biggest difference that I see is that I can go to a mentor and they can help me with the situation at the time. I can go to my coach. They're going to teach me strategies that help me deal with the situations when they're not there. Truly a great experience and, like I said, I really do hope it continues, and I think you guys are doing a great thing.

In contrast to other participants, MS-1 has had an education coach as part of a degree program at a local university. However, this coach served as more of an advisor rather than coaching for leadership or development of the participant. She expressed her expectations, understandings and impact of coaching in the following ways:

Honestly, I really had no idea. The only inkling I might have had is because I did have a coach for -----, so I was thinking, what assignments do I need to do? And when are they due? I expect to learn more about the resources that are available to us as a district. I expect to set goals and reflect on those goals. I also expect more feedback on how I am leading others. It was really helpful. One of the things was, this is confidential. This is somebody who is not in my building, somebody I don't see every day. That was great, because I could talk to ----- very freely, very openly and say, " -----, what do I do here? They're coming to me with a personal issue, and I don't know how to handle it." And so, his [the coach's] experience with that really was helpful. So definitely, definitely a benefit. And I know that I had come to [the coach] to talk in confidence about other things, even as a teacher, when you were my assistant principal, so you've already gained my trust.

The following statements reflect participant HS-1's perceptions of leadership coaching. First are the participant's perceptions prior to being coached and then

reflections on its impact on her development and effectiveness as a school leader and new assistant principal.

I wondered how beneficial it would be, how much this would accomplish. I don't think I had any fears but I was curious about that. But I take it that it was more of, I don't need one more thing and I don't need to waste time. It made me realize we, and I know this, but we go through the day thinking about what we are going to say next instead of stopping and listening to someone else. Or, having someone give me their full attention and really listen to me made me want to listen to others more, made me aware of that....it made me have all of these ideas about working with young people and teaching them, having them have coaches, teach them to be coaches. It just, it made me think about many things that we could use in the school, I can use in the school, with other people. One the confidentiality, just reiterating, "This is completely confidential," was beneficial. I felt like things were completely objective, and that took any sense of or preconceived notion of prejudice or judgment that might come about; there just was never any instance where I felt that I was being judged for any of my own insecurities or what we discussed and I think that really set the tone. I have been very pleasantly surprised. I could not have imagined that this process would have been as beneficial as it has been. I look forward to the sessions.

Personalized Learning

Personalized learning is the essence of coaching. Participants continually expressed the value in leadership coaching as highly personal and relevant to their needs, growth, efficacy, competency, and performance in their new role. The greatest value that participants expressed was that the experience was personal—directly relevant and applicable to them. It allowed them

to grow and apply skills and abilities immediately to what they were dealing with at the moment in their professional lives. The goals and objectives that came out of each session were specific to their immediate needs. They also expressed that the process was highly reflective and allowed them to change and adjust their practice based on their view of events, their weaknesses, and their strengths. Participants continually expressed feelings of value and appreciation for this form of professional learning being solely directed to them, individually.

Over the course of her career participant ES-1 has participated in a variety of professional learning opportunities. When discussing leadership coaching and its value as a form of professional learning she expressed that she felt it was highly valuable in her growth and development and that specifically, the highly personalized nature made it a directly beneficial form of professional learning.

I'll be honest, it's probably been the biggest professional growth piece that I've had just because, as awesome as the district leadership academy was, and as great as that is, it's nice to have that individualized attention. I really appreciated it, I felt like I was really being heard and it gave me a chance to stop and reflect. Not that I wasn't doing that this year, but it's been a busy year. I know everyone can relate to that, and so you go, go, go, and then it's like, oh you know, maybe I should've done this better.

When discussing what made coaching effective for her, she stated:

I think that was part of maybe the process of, I did a lot of the talking and I'm sure you can tell, I don't really have a problem talking. It was nice also to have that one on one attention, to be honest, where someone was really sitting down and listening to me sort through my own day or my own issues that were going on....The first word that pops in my mind is *personalized*. I think it needs to be personalized and personalized to the district that

you're working in definitely. For instance, not to name names or anything, but I'm taking a leadership program right now through a college, university, and I don't want to say those classes aren't valuable but it's what I need in my day to day work, it's not as applicable. Right? I mean, you guys know that. Definitely something that's personalized to your district, something that's even personalized to I feel like a lot of what we do is situational. Right? I had a kid call the police during the after school program, call 911, the police showed up, nobody even knew. Nobody's preparing you for okay, what do I do? How do I trace this? I think that personalized piece of professional development, I know that's I felt like what I was lacking this year. Was that, oh my gosh, I'm panicking, who do I call? Okay, how do I do this? That definitely comes to mind...I feel like my time with coaching is more meaningful than me sitting in classes going over PowerPoints of things that may be laws, or things that I already know about. I really need to know how to apply it to my everyday life.

Participant ES-2 expressed her feelings and perception of the impact of leadership coaching as a form of professional learning in the following ways:

There's is so much benefit to having someone talk to you about your job. Because, when you're in the moment, when you're here at school, you're always focused on taking care of the other people. When you have that time set aside, when you just sit down and reflect on your goals, your areas of strength, your areas you want to improve in. It just provides a nice, structured, way to maintain that focus, and that drive, for self-improvement. I already came into this understanding that really, it's a me-focused coaching session. And, it's to guide and direct me and to identifying things that I want to discuss or things that I need support, or areas I need to improve in. The reflective listening was very helpful. Because

as I reflected out loud, I think sometimes I was all over the place with my reflection, so just being able to ask clarifying questions...But even when you would say, "Let's talk about this area," it's really, I think everybody comes to the table with so many ideas, but when every day you come to work and you focus on accomplishing all the tasks, sometimes we forget to reflect on the importance of the position and that ultimately, I think that I did most of the time have the answer to some of the problems, it was just oh, I needed to think about it this way. Or any questions that you may have asked allowed me to think about my situation in a totally different way that only an outsider may have seen.

Participant ES-3 expressed the benefits of leadership coaching as it relates to professional learning and specifically its effectiveness as specific and individualized learning.

I think the biggest part, and I know this and I've heard it from some of the other candidates, that the fact that you guys spent time just with us. Some one-on-one time, and just let us talk. And, like you said, it wasn't a guidance, like we're telling you what to do, mentor. It was a coaching where it was a talk and get things out and let's see reflections and having someone to talk about that with. So, just having that time to spend on us has been wonderful and putting us on a little pedestal for just a minute, saying, "Great job kind of thing." I expressed to her [the coach] how important that is just to have someone focus on me for just a little bit and let me talk, and leading me to question myself. Because every day that she would lead, after a session I would reflect all the way home, and it seemed like I was able to come back the next day even bigger and better, I guess you could say. Having a coach and not just a mentor, because I wasn't sure what the difference was at the beginning, and as time went on I realized that it was more about really making me think versus telling me how to think kind of idea. The coaching program, I think, definitely needs to continue,

for sure. Truly beneficial in the fact that it gave me a moment, like I said, to sit down, talk to someone else, and not be told how to do it, what to do, any of that. It was simply like, "Well, how do you feel about that?" Or, "Why do you think that?" Or, "Why?" It was just a lot of questions brought back on me, but it was some time spent on just me. Because the fact that she would come all the way to my school, which is a little drive for anyone, to come all the way here, to set up time in her schedule, [to say], "Let's just talk. Let me get to know you." That whole piece, I can't tell you enough how much it means for someone to spend a little time on just you.

The participant reflected on perceptions of prior experiences of professional learning and addressed leadership coaching as a form of professional learning. MS-1 expressed the value and impact of leadership coaching as a personal form of professional learning by indicating:

Sometimes professional development, it might be about a program, or a curriculum, or a principal, or somebody consulting, that's not part of our district, and doesn't really know the nuances of what's going on. It is usually tedious, boring, and useless. I'm not a "sit and get" type person.

Specifically on leadership coaching the participant shared these feelings and perceptions:

It's been great. I really enjoy talking to my coach, because so often, we sometimes get caught up in what's been going on, so it is refreshing to take a break and have somebody to talk to outside of work, outside of your school. And for us, specifically, my coach was able to help me with a couple of problems that I didn't really think that I wanted to necessarily bring up to the other AP and the principal. It's geared towards me, helping me grow professionally, it's not about you as a coach, it's all about me. Kind of like a therapist. I like the fact that I control it. It works for me, because it is supposed to be about me.

Below are statements that reflect HS-1's perceptions of leadership coaching as it relates to professional learning. The participant reflects on coaching and its impact as highly personalized learning.

I don't know that any material in the college courses could have prepared me for the day-to-day experiences and conflict that came up. I think the majority of it I just had to experience on my own, because all the situations were so different. Individualized, that being the biggest thing, way too often professional development, so-called professional development is not, it's very general. So anything that's personalized and something that the educator can take immediately and begin to use I think is good. I know that I shared things in the coaching sessions that I wouldn't have shared. I may have shared with a friend but I wouldn't have shared in the same way, and I wouldn't have reflected on it the same way. So the prompting to reflect and to answer my own questions basically was in a very objective manner, and so I don't feel like I was led to think or believe or say anything, kind of came to some conclusions on my own. It was very positive, I almost felt guilty. Well I did feel a little guilty initially. Just that someone else was taking the time to give me their full attention, I got to schedule it, I got to say where it was. When I realized it was all about me, and that was probably the second session, when we really started talking a little bit and I realized it was all going to point back to me.

Trustworthiness

Validity refers to the researcher following procedures and processes that ensure that the study measures or tests what it is actually intended to measure (Shenton, 2004). Validity was established for this study in the following ways:

1. The study was conducted using well established and recognized methods for qualitative research such as the use of vetted surveys, following interview protocols, and internal review of the processes by both Kennesaw State University and the school district in which the study took place.
2. Participants were selected randomly from the candidates who met the criteria as part of the district's leadership academy.
3. Triangulation of data was established by the use of different methods of data collection, with different types and levels of participants, and occurring at varied times and locations over the course of the study.
4. Peer scrutiny was routinely provided by review of methods and interviews with co-researchers and colleagues in the field. This occurred on a monthly basis over the course of the study.
5. Member checking was conducted with participants to clarify interpretations and meaning of data by participants.

Transferability and dependability have been achieved by establishing and documenting the context of the study. Procedures, methodologies, and a description of the phenomenon have been documented so that comparisons can be made, the study can be repeated, and it may be scrutinized. The researcher has used bracketing to confront his biases, assumptions, and pre-dispositions to contribute to the credibility and conformability of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of newly appointed assistant principals participating in leadership coaching as part of their professional learning throughout their first year. The study explored the perceptions of the preparation and performance of educators who assumed leadership roles in schools. The researcher analyzed their experiences, duties, responsibilities, performance, growth, development, and learning throughout the first year as assistant principals and specifically the impact that the phenomenon of leadership coaching had, if any, on those challenges and the self-efficacy of the participants to perform in a leadership role. The method of research was phenomenological and sought to explore three questions:

1. In what ways, if any, does leadership coaching help newly appointed assistant principals address challenges faced in their professional role?
2. In what ways, if any, does leadership coaching develop leadership capacity and self-efficacy in newly appointed assistant principals?
3. What are newly appointed assistant principals' perceptions of leadership coaching as a useful and viable form of professional learning?

Five participants participated in leadership coaching as part of a school district leadership academy as part of professional learning and support throughout their first year as assistant principals. The following is a summary of the conclusions after data analysis regarding the perceptions of the participants as it relates to the research questions.

Perceived Impact of Coaching on the Challenges Faced by Assistant Principals

The data revealed that participants felt that leadership coaching had a positive impact on their growth in specific skills associated with their duties and responsibilities as assistant principals. Growth was a major theme that developed through data analysis.

Participants expressed feelings of being overwhelmed as they began work in their new positions. For example, statements such as “There is probably not training for this” and “They’re calling for me, and I don’t know what to do” from participants indicate that there are not sufficient professional learning opportunities to prepare for the challenges of the position.

There are several factors that contributed to this feeling. They expressed that much of their training, education, and experiences were not relevant and did not prepare them for the volume, pace, and change in skills required of the assistant principal. This sentiment is exemplified in a statement from one participant; “It would just be like things are coming at you, coming at you, coming at you.” This is a common feeling that participants were reacting to every new situation that confronted them on the job.

For example, many participants expressed that they had little to no experience in factors associated with discipline of students. Though they had cited and written referrals to administrators on students and had communication in some cases with parents as teachers, they expressed that handling discipline in an administrative capacity required a different and enhanced set of skills than it did as a teacher. This was not limited to just the knowledge of the student code of conduct and the referral and documentation process, but that an entirely more diverse set of skills in communication, school law, and district and school policies was necessary.

Time management was also a major area where participants struggled. The variety of situations that come up on a daily basis and stalled planned work contributed to the frustration

and feelings of helplessness that the participants often experienced. This lack of preparation and frustration is indicative of the effectiveness of professional learning for assistant principals. The professional learning for assistant principals often ignores what the literature identifies as effective and essential components of professional learning such as being school based, focused on actual practice, and focusing on a few concepts one at a time (Brown & Militello, 2016). Another contributing factor to this frustration is every school community is unique and has unique needs, populations, staff, and challenges. This means that no one type of professional learning or class can address the wide variety of situations or the skills that are needed by administrators to meet the challenges and needs of a particular school.

Participants described leadership coaching as a particularly effective form of professional learning that improved their skills and competencies throughout their first year. They identified leadership coaching as being highly personalized learning and specific to their individual needs. Common sentiments from participants were that they felt empowered by coaching, that coaching sessions were reflective, and they were able to set goals directly related to the areas in which they felt they needed improvement. They were able to continually improve as they reached those goals and set new goals. They also expressed that the reflective nature of coaching allowed them to become increasingly self-aware of their level of skills in the different competencies required by their job. Participants were able to identify and grow in these areas.

Statements such as “coaching has opened my eyes to areas of growth I wasn’t aware of before” and “I have grown as a leader” are a direct reflection of the perceptions and feelings of the participants. They indicate that leadership coaching significantly impacted and improved their leadership capacity in addition to developing and mastering new skills. It indicates that their growth as professionals was positively impacted by leadership coaching as a form of

professional learning.

Perceived Impact of Coaching on Self-Efficacy and Confidence

The data revealed that participants felt that leadership coaching had a positive impact on their efficacy and confidence in their ability to do their job. They expressed that leadership coaching increased their belief that they could increasingly develop skills and mobilize resources to improve school operations, programs, and instruction. This belief in their ability spanned a variety of tasks and increased their leadership competence, resulting in influence on teachers and staff to improve their own performance and contribute to student success.

Participants indicated feelings of empowerment, confidence, assurance, and direction in the days and weeks after coaching sessions. These feelings bolstered their willingness to implement skills, plans, and changes to attain performance goals that had been set as part of the coaching process. This process creates a positive feedback loop where positive results raised confidence in their abilities, which leads them to expand their circle of influence and set new goals, which leads to growth and improvement, which in turn raises confidence, and so on.

The theme of personalized learning again emerged as a constant point from the participants' perspective as the reason that leadership coaching had a significant impact on their confidence and self-efficacy. Statements such as "the confidence level in myself and my ability to this position and to know I'm on the right track has grown tremendously" are strong indicators that leadership coaching has a positive impact on self-efficacy and confidence. These types of statements clearly reflect the perceptions of the participants regarding the impact of leadership coaching on their self-efficacy and feelings of confidence in regard to their increase in leadership capacity, skill development, and competency as a school leader.

Perception of Leadership Coaching as Useful and Viable Professional Learning

Participants indicated that they felt leadership coaching was a positive, personal, and useful form of professional learning. Often professional learning models reflect direct instruction that seeks to inform en masse. It often focuses on the implementation of a program or general ways that instruction or knowledge should be obtained and implemented as practice, otherwise known as “sit and get.” The data indicates that participants do not respond well or benefit from traditional models of professional learning. Leadership coaching provided participants with a different model of professional learning that they describe as more personal, more relevant, and more immediate in helping them grow in the areas that were important to them as individuals. This resulted in improved performance, deeper learning, bigger growth, and increased leadership capacity for the participants. Some statements from participants reflect their perceptions of the value of leadership coaching as a form of professional learning such as; “It (coaching) has probably been the biggest professional growth piece that I have had.....it is nice to have that individualized attention” and “ I would say the value and impact (of coaching) would be extremely high”. These statements reflect participants’ beliefs that leadership coaching is a highly effective and valuable form of professional learning for educators.

In regard to the viability and sustainability of leadership coaching as a model of professional learning for districts or schools to implement in education, there are some areas for concern. Leadership coaching as professional learning requires a one-to-one ratio. This presents a monetary and funding concern for districts. For most districts funding one-to-one ongoing professional learning is cost prohibitive. In addition, a foundational component for effective coaching is trust. Coaches should not be supervisors or direct reports to those that they coach. In order for the clients, or the individuals being coached, to be completely free of concerns of retribution, evaluation, or revealing their personal shortcomings, coaches should not be

colleagues or employees of the same district. With these considerations in mind, although participants expressed the value of and the desire for coaching to continue, leadership coaching needs fundamental delivery changes and development in order to be considered as a viable model for professional learning for educators.

Essence of Phenomenon

Leadership coaching is a form of professional learning. In professions outside of education it is used to develop and increase performance and leadership capacity. It is a newer phenomenon in the field of education and has not been widely used or explored as a model of professional learning in the field. There were four major themes that emerged from this study: leadership coaching impacted participants growth both personally and professionally; leadership coaching impacted participants' confidence and self-efficacy in relation to their skills and leadership capacity as assistant principals; the coaching process emerged as a unique model of professional learning that was engaging and beneficial for participants; and leadership coaching was highly valued and effective as a form of professional learning because it was an extremely personal form of professional learning. Some of the most powerful indicators of the impact of leadership coaching from participants are reflected in statements regarding the personalized nature of leadership coaching. "It's individualized, that is the biggest thing...way to often professional learning it's too general" and other statements such as, "the first thing that pops in my mind about it (coaching) is personalized." These statements indicate the high value that leadership coaching has for participants as an effective form of professional learning as highly relevant, and highly personal learning.

This theme, of personalized learning, continually wove a thread through all the data and perceptions of the participants. It was a constant example, and a constant expression that

coaching impacted each of the other themes and effected each participant. Through data analysis the concept and benefit of leadership coaching being a personal method of learning that specifically addressed the needs of the participants and their unique positions and circumstances was continuous and overarching. Participants continuously expressed and reflected on the deep influence that leadership coaching had on the growth and development on themselves as leaders because it was highly personal. At its core, the essence of coaching that affects every aspect of the clients practice and engages adult learners is the personalized learning that leadership coaching provides.

Limitations of Findings

Participants

This study was conducted with newly appointed assistant principals in a suburban school district in the metro Atlanta area. This district was selected because it has implemented leadership coaching as a component of its District Leadership Academy Two (DLA2) which is the district leadership academy for new assistant principals. There were 18 district personnel who were included as part of the DLA. The researcher in this study was participating in the coaching of five of those district personnel as assigned by the district. As part of bracketing, those five participants were eliminated from the selection pool for this study.

The pool for selected participants for this study was reduced to 13 individuals. Six participants from the pool of 13 were selected for this study, and all six of the selected participants completed informed consent agreements. The initial selections represented five females and one male; two elementary participants, two middle school participants, and two high school participants. The choice to have each level equally represented presented the first limiting factor regarding participants.

The second limiting factor was that there was only one male left in the final pool of 13 participants. This male was one of only two middle school assistant principals remaining from the pool. This selected participant declined to take part in this study. He was replaced with a female elementary assistant principal who agreed to take part in the study. As a result, all the participants in the study were female. Although this lends itself to homogeneous sampling, this was not the focus group of participants that was desired. This presented a significant inequity of perceptions and points of view. This inequity is a limiting factor in the research. Further research should include a balance in the gender of participants. This did give a unique perspective and specific voice to women in regard to leadership coaching.

Additionally, the study initially included six participants. As the study progressed one of the participants, a female high school assistant principal, did not complete all scheduled interviews, specifically the post-participation interview. This lack of final data created a significant gap in the contribution of valid data for this participant. Because of the lack of participation from this individual the totality of her data was excluded from the final data analysis. This resulted in a final participant pool of five.

DLA Additional Supports for Professional Learning

As part of the DLA, participants were required to attain their educational specialist degree (EdS). All the participants attended a local university as a cohort to attain this degree required by their district.

Additionally, all participants were serviced in monthly training and support in their new roles through professional learning sessions at the district. Because all participants were part of these cohorts, other factors contributed to their development and growth as leaders. For example, in data analysis participants identified relationships with colleagues and the ability to

connect and discuss issues (networking) as a factor in their growth as leaders and their competency in their role as assistant principals.

Since leadership coaching was not the sole source of professional learning during the study and the scope of the study provided no procedures, other than the statements of the participants to delineate the contribution of other forms of professional learning, this must be listed as a limiting factor in the outcome of this study. Future studies should attempt to isolate leadership coaching as the sole source of professional learning in order to mitigate these limiting factors.

District Familiarity

Since participants were all from the same district, prior district policies and practices may have impacted options for improvement that participants may have chosen. Participants may have felt restricted by policy to attempt new or different methods for improvement other than what they may have considered to be acceptable. Because the coaching process is part of the professional learning offered to the members of the DLA, participants may have seen participation as a requirement and view it as something in which they must progress. Leadership coaching should be something in which the client participates voluntarily; something that that an individual seeks to improve based on his/her needs, and not something that the client feels he/she must demonstrate mastery of or gained proficiency. In addition, the clients may feel compelled to align areas for improvement in areas they feel the district views as important. This may also impact the study in that participants may feel compelled to participate as part of their professional responsibilities as participants in the DLA. It may also discourage participants from reporting or documenting perceptions that they may see as negative for the district.

Another factor along these lines is familiarity with personnel. Because several of the certified coaches are employed within the districts there may be a concern that the participants are being evaluated rather than being coached. This may have caused participants to be cautious in responses to interview questions. Because some of the coaches may be perceived to be higher in the organization or that they are supervisors in addition to coaches, the participants may have hesitated to reveal areas where they feel they need to improve.

Implications of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that leadership coaching is effective and impactful as a model of professional learning for educators and school leaders in education administration. Though further research is needed, results from this study, in addition to results from practice in other fields, imply that leadership coaching should be considered for inclusion as a model for professional learning by districts and schools for educators. Also, the findings of this study indicate that the exact model utilized may not be a sustainable and fiscally feasible model to implement for districts. However, coaching in some form such as team, group, or selective coaching, should be considered for the development of leadership. In a landscape where effective professional learning is critical to the growth and development of effective school leadership, and student achievement models that emphasize specific and personalized learning are the norm, models such as leadership coaching should be considered.

Recommendations for Further Research

Leadership coaching is an established model of professional learning in the business world but has a limited implementation as a model for professional learning in education. Further

research is needed to determine the sustainability and viability of leadership coaching as a model of professional learning and its impact on education, teachers, and educational leaders.

Further research should include both qualitative and quantitative studies. Research should include studies of larger sample groups and participants that receive coaching for extended periods of time. As previously stated, this study included participants that received additional supports and forms of professional learning over the course of this study in addition to leadership coaching. Therefore, further research should seek participants for research that are receiving leadership coaching as a sole source of professional learning.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Interview# _____

Interview Type: Semi-structured

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Script:

Hello, my name is Tom Flugum, I am a graduate student at Kennesaw State University and I am conducting a qualitative research study related to educational leadership and professional learning. Thank you for being here and for participating in my study.

The interview will consist of ___44___ questions, some demographic, others related to the focus of the study which is; the ways that leadership coaching as a form of professional learning addresses the challenges faced by newly appointed assistant principals.

The interview will last about __30-45___ minutes. With your permission, the interview will be recorded so that I may accurately document, transcribe, and code the information you relay for the study.

Your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for professional learning and educational purposes. If at any time you wish to discontinue the use of a recording let me know and I will stop.

Your participation is completely voluntary if you wish to stop, take a break or withdraw your participation you may do so at any time without consequence.

Continuation of the interview implies consent to the interview at this time.

Do you have any questions about the interview or the interview process? With your consent, we will begin.

Please rank yourself from 1-5 on the following questions with 1 being not confident and a 5 being very confident.

In your current role, how confident do you believe you are in...

1. Making sound decisions based on professional, ethical, and legal principles. *
2. Managing and organizing the school environment efficiently and effectively to ensure that it meets the needs of the curriculum. *
3. Managing and organizing the school environment efficiently and effectively to ensure that it meets the needs of health and safety regulations. *
4. Managing the school's financial and human resources effectively and efficiently to achieve the school's educational goals and priorities. *
5. Creating and maintaining effective partnerships with parents, caretakers, and other agencies to support and improve pupils' achievement and personal development. *
6. Managing my own workload and that of others to allow an appropriate life-work balance. *

7. Cooperating and working with relevant agencies to ensure and protect the welfare of the children of my school. *
8. Motivating my staff to work effectively and efficiently. *
9. Taking appropriate action when performance (mine and my staffs') is unsatisfactory *
10. Adapting my leadership style according to the situation I am faced with. *
11. Delegating management tasks to my staff appropriately. *
12. Monitoring the implementation of management tasks I delegate to my staff. *
13. Ensuring that learning is at the center of strategic planning and resource management. *
14. Encouraging my staff to actively participate in decision making. *
15. Developing school self-evaluation plans. *
16. Implementing school self-evaluation plans. *
17. Using school self-evaluation data to support school improvement projects. *
18. Managing and resolving conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact. *
19. Developing a school climate which enables everyone to work collaboratively (share knowledge and understanding, celebrate success, and accept responsibility for outcomes). *
20. Developing a collaborative climate between the school and external agencies (department of education, community, parents). *
21. Evaluating teacher performance through classroom observations. *
22. Providing feedback to teachers on their performance following classroom observation. *
23. Using research evidence to inform teaching and learning. *
24. Ensuring that school practices comply with state curricula and policies. *
25. Ensuring that school practices reflect community needs. *
26. Explaining to staff and parents how the decisions in the school are related to state and national institutions and policies. *
27. Systematically monitoring student performance. *
28. Monitoring the effectiveness of classroom practice and promote its impact on student performance. *
29. Effectively using the available school infrastructure to enhance student and staff learning. *

30. Developing effective strategies for newly qualified staff induction and professional development. *
31. Developing effective strategies for staff continuing professional development. *

Please answer the following open-ended questions

32. Describe your characteristics that you consider strengths in your new administrative position. *
33. Reflect on and describe your perceptions of the assistant principal position prior to assuming the job. How has your understanding of the role of the assistant principal changed? *
34. After two months in the new position, what has surprised you about your assistant principal responsibilities? *
35. What skills do you want to further develop or refine to benefit your leadership? *
36. How would you describe effective professional learning for leaders? *
37. Describe your knowledge of leadership coaching. *
38. What are your expectations in terms of professional growth from the
39. What professional goal(s) do you have for your first year of the assistant principalship? *

40. Demographic Information

41. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Now, just a few demographic items and you will be finished.
42. At what school level are you an assistant principal? *
- ES MS HS

43. How many years of experience in education do you have? *

0-5

6-10

11-15

16-20

21-25

26-30

More than 30

44. Are you female or male? *

Female

Male

Please enter your date of birth. *

Date

Appendix B

The following steps have been found to be beneficial and productive in the Leadership Coaching. You are welcome to use any and all or develop your own.

Step 1: Establish parameters of coaching in the program (you can do these in any order)

- Share the coaching agreement form (Appendix A) and ask for a signature (This is a form that I developed and you are welcome to use it or have one of your own.)
- Discuss the process of coaching in the program that includes minimum of 4 hours of coaching during the residency and the responsibilities of the coach and the client. (I met 3 times during the semester as two times just did not provide adequate time to coach.)
- Describe your approach and experience with coaching.
- Establish the distinction between coaching and mentoring and describe why you will be coaching. I also explain the role of their mentor and what they will be expected to do.

Step 2: Establish rapport

- Check the energy level of the client (Ask - On a scale of 1-10 how are you feeling today?)
- At the first meeting, I like to have the Personal and Professional Balance Wheels as a focus. This allows for getting to know the individual a little better. Allow for time to complete and discuss the ratings.

Step 3: Focus on the areas for improvements

- Using the balance wheels, check where the individual would like to spend time for improvements during the semester.
- Establish priorities and discuss what improvements would be of greatest benefit to them?
- Ask lots of questions and have the client provide as much information to you so you can build a strategy for coaching.

Step 4: Coaching

- Start with one of the areas for improvement and begin the process of developing a goal.
- Have client identify what they are doing, what has worked, not worked, and they would like to try out.
- Use the SMART goal approach and develop a timeline that is reasonable.
- Ask client to send it back to you in two weeks (establish the time/date you expect the form) so you can get their perspective.

- Remind that your role is to hold them accountable and expect to have something by the due date.

Step 5: Summarize and check for satisfaction

- Ask client to summarize the meeting so you can hear their thoughts about the areas for improvements.
- Check to see how the client rated the meeting (Scale of 1-5 or 1-10, your choice)
- Provide feedback on your own perspectives about the direction the client has selected and assure that you are there to support their efforts.

Step 6: Set up a time for the next coaching meeting

- Provide for at least 4 weeks between meetings.
- Let client know if you will be sending any documentation back. (I personally like to send a brief summary of what I heard during the meeting as a way to check if they agree and that the client knows that I listened carefully. They can return that with further comments and/or keep for their files. This also provides a great segway for the next meeting as the point for starting the coaching.)

Thank the client for their time and leave (60 minutes is max for coaching).

NOTE: Coaches should usually fill out a one-page summary form and make notes on the areas that need to be work on as well. It helps to stay focused on coaching and is a record for the coaches own documentation. It is confidential so no one else sees it.

Appendix C

Coaching Agreement

Coach: _____

Client: _____

Coaching will begin on date _____ and will end on date _____

Policies: Client agrees to abide by the Coaching Policies, as initialed below.

- This agreement between your Coach and the above-named client will begin on _____ and will constitute a minimum of 12 hours of service. The services to be provided by the coach to the individual client may include personal on-site coaching, telephone coaching, and e-mail follow-up as designed jointly with the individual client. Coaching, which is **NOT** advice, therapy, or counseling, may address specific personal projects, relationship building/problem solving, business successes, or general conditions in the individual client's life or profession. Other coaching services include value clarification, joint brainstorming, identifying plans of action, and examining modes of operating in life, asking clarifying questions, and making empowering requests or observations.
- Confidentiality is an important component of successful coaching. To the extent allowed by the law, your coach will keep the specific content of the coaching sessions confidential. Communication with the school district is limited to conveying your continuing commitment to the process and soliciting comments from the school district designees (if appropriate and agreed upon in writing) regarding specific changes they see and satisfaction with the services provided to you, the individual client.
- The work plan will be created by the coach and client and will be finalized by _____.
- The coach will reflect monthly on our work plan. This reflection will be shared with the coach's manager.
- A separate document, the coach's monthly report, will be completed by the coach, approved by the client, and shared with the coaches' manager.
- We will review our work plan midway through our work together on _____. The coach will write a reflection on this work and will share with you upon your request.

Meeting Logistics

- We will meet for ____ hours per month.
- Our meetings will take place on _____, from _____ to _____.

- The location for our meetings will be _____.
- Our time will be documented on the coaching log, which can be shared with you at your request.
- If one of us has to cancel a meeting, whenever possible we will give the other person at least twenty-four hours' notice. We also recognize that unexpected things come up and that sometimes we are forced to cancel without notice.
- If the coach cancels a meeting, he or she will make every possible effort to reschedule as soon as possible.
- If the client cancels a meeting, the coach will make an effort to reschedule, but cannot always promise that this will happen due to his or her other commitments.
- If cancellations become a pattern, the coach and client agree to review the coaching agreement.

Feedback

- The coach welcomes feedback from the client at any time. The client is encouraged to share feedback.
- The coach will ask the client for formal feedback midway through the coaching contract and at the end of working together. If possible, the coach will also provide an online link for an anonymous survey on his or her services.

The power of the coaching relationship can only be granted by the client. The individual client agrees to do just that - have a coaching relationship that is powerful and challenging. Throughout the working relationship, the coach will engage in direct and personal conversations with the individual client. The client can count on the coach to be direct and straightforward in asking questions, making observations, and making requests. If the individual client has concerns that the coaching relationship is not powerful and value added, the client will communicate this to the coach to determine the steps that will return power to the coaching relationship for the individual client.

___I authorize ___ do not authorize release of information regarding goals, objectives, measures, accomplishments to the individuals listed below:

Client: _____

Coach: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____